This document contains 3 customizable template letters to patients which were developed to support ophthalmologists during the COVID‑19 era.

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# Dear <Salutation> <First Name> <Last Name>,

During this unprecedented time with the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), we want to assure you, and your families, that your safety and eye health remain our priority.

Understandably, you may feel anxious about attending regular clinic appointments, for various reasons, but please know that our clinic follows strict guidelines around infection control.

We aim to minimize patient, and staff, risk of exposure while undertaking crucial eye care services; therefore, the following practices are implemented based on the most recent clinical recommendations.

**How we have adapted our clinic practice**

* Only patients with urgent needs and/or those requiring frequent management, such as your anti-VEGF injections, are being seen at this time. This action limits exposure while addressing the needs of patients requiring urgent care.
* Non-urgent appointments are being rescheduled, but our practice remains open should an emergency occur, or if there are changes to your vision between visits that require care.

**Information regarding your upcoming appointment**

* We may reach out to you, prior to your appointment, with a series of questions regarding your current health status.
* We have adapted our scheduling to allow for the minimum number of patients within the waiting room at any given time.
* You may not receive your regular visual acuity test or eye scan before your anti-VEGF treatment procedure. This is to ensure that you are in the clinic for the minimal amount of time required.
* Your ophthalmologist may wear a mask with a plastic shield over their eyes and limit conversation during any part of the examination.
* To limit unnecessary exposure between patients and staff, we may defer scheduling of your next appointment via phone rather than at completion of your visit.

**Ways you can reduce the risk of exposure during your visit**

* If you have had direct exposure to a positive COVID-19 patient or have a cough or fever, it is essential to call your doctor’s office ahead of time and let them know. Consequently, if your visit is not an emergency, they may ask you to stay at home.
* If you arrive at the appointment and are unwell, you may be asked to reschedule the appointment so that you do not expose other patients.
* If you anticipate a cough or sneeze during your exam, kindly cover your face with a tissue. Wash your hands with soap and water or disinfectant as soon as you can.
* Please limit to one person accompanying you to your appointment.
* The clinic may ask you and/or the person accompanying you to wait outside, instead of in the waiting room. This is a normal practice to protect you, the other patients, and the office staff as per agreed protocols of social distancing.
* While in the waiting room, maintain a distance of at least 1.5 to 2 meters (5-6 feet) from others.
* You may, or may not, be given a mask to wear during the treatment.

**If you are unable to attend your visit**

* We are asking only patients for whom treatment is crucial to preserve sight in an eye to maintain appointments and we will take all measures to minimize risk. Risk will not be completely eliminated, however, and we will understand if, despite the safety measures above, you choose to cancel a visit at any time.
* Please contact the clinic as soon as possible to cancel your appointment and schedule a replacement appointment.
* In the lead up to your next scheduled appointment, regularly monitor your vision, such as with an Amsler Grid test, attached to this email, making sure to alternate eyes when conducting the test.
* If you do notice a change in your vision, please contact us to assess if an emergency visit is needed.

**Other ways to limit your exposure and reduce your risk during daily life**

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

* **Wash your hands frequently:** Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
* **Maintain social distancing:** Maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet) from others.
* **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth:** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose, or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
* **Practice respiratory hygiene:** This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, then disposing of the used tissue immediately.
* **If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early:** Stay home if you feel unwell, but if you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.
* **Stay informed and follow the advice given by your healthcare provider:** Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow the advice given by your healthcare provider and your national and local public health authorities on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

# Dear <Salutation> <First Name> <Last Name>,

During this unprecedented time with the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), we want to assure you, and your families, that your safety and eye health remain our priority.

Understandably, you may feel anxious attending your regular clinic appointments but please know that our clinic follows strict guidelines in order to minimize your risk of exposure whilst taking into consideration your vision health needs.

Based on the most recent clinical recommendations, we will only undertake the most crucial of eye care services to address our patients with most urgent of eye health needs; therefore, the following practices have been implemented:

**How we have adapted our clinic practice**

* To maintain the principles of social distancing in our clinic we will be significantly reducing our daily patient attendence.
* In order to achieve this, only patients with urgent needs are being seen at this time. This action limits exposure while addressing the needs of those patients who require the most urgent of care.
* Non-urgent appointments are being rescheduled, but trust that our practice remains open should an emergency occur, or if there are changes to your vision between visits that require care.
* We are postponing all low‐risk Diabetic Retinopathy screening, and other screening services, until the situation has resolved and the needs of those whose treatments have been postponed, due to Covid-19 precautions, have been addressed.

**Considering the above, your previously scheduled appointment of (*Insert Date/Time*) will need to be rescheduled. Please contact our office at (Insert Contact Information) to reschedule.**

**What to do when your visit is postponed:**

* In the lead up to your next scheduled appointment, regularly monitor your vision with numerous available on-line resources such as, the Amsler grid, visual acuity, colour vision, and/or field testing.
* If you do notice a change in your vision, please contact us immediately to assess if an emergency visit is needed.
* Even though your appointment has been postponed we are still here for you and want to ensure your safety and your vision, please call or email us with any questions or to discuss any anxieties you may be having regarding your postponed visit.

Additional content to consider including if applicable

**If you are a person living with diabetes please find additional ways to reduce your risk:**

<https://www.idf.org/aboutdiabetes/what-is-diabetes/covid-19-and-diabetes.html>

* Pay extra attention to your glucose control. Regular monitoring can help avoid complications caused by high or low blood glucose.
* If you do show flu-like symptoms (raised temperature, cough, difficulty breathing), it is important to consult a healthcare professional. If you are coughing up phlegm, this may indicate an infection so you should seek medical support and treatment immediately.
* Any infection is going to raise your glucose levels and increase your need for fluids, so make sure you can access a sufficient supply of water.
* Make sure you have a good supply of the diabetes medications you need.
* Make sure you will be able to correct the situation if your blood glucose drops suddenly.
* If you live alone, make sure someone you can rely on knows you have diabetes as you may require assistance if you get ill.
* Keep a regular schedule, avoiding overwork, try to maintain a healthy diet and try to achieve a good night's sleep.

**Other ways to limit your exposure and reduce your risk during daily life**

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

* **Wash your hands frequently**: Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
* **Maintain social distancing**: Maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet) from others.
* **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth**: Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose, or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
* **Practice respiratory hygiene**: This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, then disposing of the used tissue immediately.
* **If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early**: Stay home if you feel unwell, but if you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.
* **Stay informed and follow the advice given by your healthcare provider**: Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow the advice given by your healthcare provider and your national and local public health authorities on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

# Dear <Salutation> <First Name> <Last Name>,

Living in communities where cases of COVID-19 go up and down almost on a daily basis, we have learned ways to adapt to a ‘new’ normal. This remains true in our clinic yet the safety of our patients and staff remains the priority.

Given the recent increase in cases, you may feel anxious about attending your upcoming appointment but please be assured that we at the clinic continue to follow strict guidelines for infection control and are prepared to implement additional measures as needed.

Essential eye care services are being maintained with the previous well-tested safety precautions in the clinic. These safety measures are reviewed regularly and upgraded if there are changes in the rates of COVID-19 cases.

In accordance with the ophthalmology community and guidelines of the public health authority, we have established a series of measures to implement, which are outlined in the attached infographic, based on the following categories.

**Green**: Low rates of infection: masks and social distancing essential

**Yellow**: Moderate increase in infection rates: as above and minimum number of patients in clinic waiting room

**Red**: High rates of infection: the most restrictive public health measures

We feel it is important to share these measures with you beforehand. **We will notify you ahead of the next appointment if we have moved into a green, yellow or red scenario**.

For any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the clinic.

*You may reach us at XXX during the following times YYY*.

Please remember, even during COVID-19, it is still **extremely important** to attend your regular treatment appointments in order to maintain your vision.

While all public health measures will be implemented strictly to minimize risk, it can never be completely eliminated. Therefore we will understand if, despite the safety measures above, you choose to cancel an appointment at any time.

**If you are unable to attend the appointment for any reason:**

* Please contact the clinic as soon as possible to cancel your appointment and make sure that another appointment is scheduled (your vision is important)
* Before the next scheduled appointment, monitor your vision regularly, with the attached Amsler Grid test, making sure to alternate eyes when conducting the test
* If you notice any changes in your vision, please contact the clinic to discuss whether an emergency visit is needed

We look forward to welcoming you in our clinic and working together to ensure your vision and safety is protected during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

<Salutation> <First Name> <Last Name>