

Vision Insurance

Vision insurance is a voluntary benefit that often supplements health insurance as part of a benefits package. Employers offer this benefit to employees to supplement costs for eye care and other vision needs. According to the American Optometric Association, vision stress can lead to headaches, inability to focus, blurred vision and loss of concentration. However, despite these serious risks, many employees may be reluctant to schedule routine vision checkups simply due to the cost.

What Vision Insurance Covers

Vision insurance plans typically provide employees with routine eye exams and eyewear at a reduced rate. Some plans may also cover other vision services, such as laser vision surgery or prescription eyewear that is compliant with ANSI and OSHA safety guidelines. Vision insurance typically won't cover experimental vision treatments, experimental services, or replacements for frames, eyeglasses and contact lenses.

Vision insurance is generally paid for by employees via a payroll deduction, and it's typically offered in one of two forms:

- **Vision benefits plan**—This type of plan provides vision care to employees in exchange for an annual premium, yearly deductible and/or copayment.
- **Discounted vision plan**—This plan provides vision care at a fixed, reduced rate after payment of an annual premium (or membership) and deductible.

Depending on the benefits plan, an eye exam may be covered 100% by insurance or have a copay. If an employee needs corrective lenses, those may be covered under a copay or a maximum allotted amount per year. For example, if the vision plan covers eyeglass frames up to \$100 per year, and the frames cost \$150, the employee would pay the difference of \$50.

Some plans may limit their coverage to once a year for a new set of eyeglass lenses and once every two years for new eyeglass frames. Many plans will also limit coverage to either eyeglasses or contact lenses during a plan year.

The Value of Offering Vision Insurance

By offering vision care, employers can afford employees the opportunity to enroll in coverage that meets their needs. Regular eye care can help detect diseases such as diabetes and glaucoma early on, which can help individuals:

- Lower their medical care and medication costs, as later detection of these diseases can be costlier
- Reduce their cost for short-term disability, long-term disability and workers' compensation insurance
- Maintain their health and productivity longer, as employees are more likely to remain employed when their health issues are manageable

In many cases, providing vision insurance can benefit employers as well, since employees will be healthier and more likely to continue working for a company that offers them meaningful benefits.

Summary

Vision insurance is a voluntary benefit that employers can consider as part of their benefits packages. Regular visits to the eye doctor can help identify medical problems early on, which helps lower overall costs and improves treatment. Deciding to offer vision insurance to employees can encourage them to practice preventive eye care, thus reducing their risks of developing serious health conditions.