As the number of activities a person enjoys increases, so does the need for multiple pairs of eyewear; here’s how to make sure your patients get all the glasses they need.

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Do you own one pair of shoes? One jacket? One wrench? How about only one type of cosmetic? I am willing to bet that the answer to all those questions is a definitive, “No.” Why do you own more than one of any one of these (and other) products? Because your lifestyle demands it; that’s why.

When you ponder this for a moment, you realize that no one pair of eyeglasses can truly meet all of your lifestyle needs, especially when you consider the differences between your indoor and outdoor visual needs.

The lifestyle needs and wants of every individual is the fundamental driving force behind nearly every consumer product, and it is especially appropriate when it comes to eyewear. Think of it as the “inside-out” of eyewear needs.

How Many?
How many pairs of glasses does a person need? That’s a good question, and its answer has significant ramifications for every eyewear buyer, with particular significance for eyecare offices.

Course Description: Owning one pair of eyeglasses is like owning one pair of shoes—that one pair simply cannot serve all the needs a person has. Since people have varied lifestyles that subject them to a wide range of visual demands, both indoors and outdoors, they need a variety of eyewear that meets those diverse needs. Understanding and recommending the proper eyewear options for patients’ indoor and outdoor activities might be called the “inside-out” of eyewear dispensing. This course explains “inside-out” dispensing and how to integrate it into your practice so your patients receive all the eyewear options they truly need.

The need for multiple pairs of eyeglasses can be plotted on a continuum. One end of the continuum illustrates those who have a completely sedentary lifestyle that only requires a single pair of eyeglasses. For example, a reclusive, homebound, bedridden person may only need a pair of bifocals to read and watch TV. At the other end of the continuum, you’ll find those who are extremely active. A good example is someone who works at an office job by day, loves to cycle, rides a motorcycle, skis, plays racquetball and tennis, loves fishing and boating, and enjoys dancing during leisure time. This person will need multiple pairs of eyeglasses for function and fashion, for indoor and outdoor use.

Here’s an example of a person in Richmond, VA. He is 29 years old and has three part-time jobs in three different unique settings. He works around the house and yard using power tools and woodworking equipment. He rides a bicycle both on road and off, enjoys road and cross country running, and likes to kayak. His eyewear collection contains seven pairs:

1. Dress Rimless Glasses (A flexible titanium mounting with clear Trivex™ lenses that have an anti-reflective [AR] treatment)
   These are his everyday glasses. They are fashionable, lightweight, forgiving, and provide great vision.

2. Dress Fashion-Forward (A handpainted, full-rimmed frame with clear high index lenses and an AR treatment)
   He considers these his edgy, bold, and unique glasses. He wears these out to dinner or for other dressy events.

3. Safety Glasses (A full rimmed metal safety frame in a traditional men’s style with side shields and clear polycarbonate lenses)
These are his safety glasses. He uses them when he works in the yard, shop, or house.

4. Driving Glasses (A flexible titanium rimless mounting with dark gray/green polycarbonate polarized lenses and back-side AR treatment)
   He uses these eyeglasses for driving. They are extremely lightweight so they remain comfortable for long periods of time. Their polarizing filter reduces eye strain.

5. Knock-Around Outdoor Glasses (A large coverage plastic frame with 70% gray polycarbonate lenses)
   He uses these as his “knock-around” pair. You'll find him wearing them during light yard work and while running.

6. Active Outdoor Sunglasses (A plastic frame with interchangeable gray, red, and yellow lenses with Rx and plano shields)
   He uses them for road biking, mountain biking, running, kayaking, and duathlons. With interchangeable Rx and plano shields, he can use them with or without his contact lenses. These are not polarized, since polarization distorts the image on his bicycle computer and GPS unit.

7. Computer Glasses (A modified oval shape in a metal monel frame with polycarbonate lenses and an AR treatment)
   These are used for computer work and detailed intermediate viewing.

As you can see, as the number of activities an individual participates in increases, the need for multiple pairs of eyewear increases as well. This is especially true for sunglasses. One pair of glasses cannot possibly work well for all activities an individual may participate in.

Why Sell Multiple Pairs
There are several good reasons for selling more than one pair of glasses to every patient. The first and most important one is that it is your professional responsibility to provide every patient with the best options you can for their visual well being. Anything less means that you are not offering all that you could to improve the quality of the person's life and lifestyle.

In offices that have a doctor, it is also the doctor's professional responsibility to recommend all the eyewear options appropriate for a particular patient as indicated by the interview and eye examination. A doctor's recommendation is a powerful tool and one that should not be overlooked by any eyecare office. (See “Just What the Doctor Ordered,” at right.)

The second reason is that your office’s bottom line can significantly improve if you conscientiously offer multiple eyewear choices to every patient. In other words, it's good business. Remember, even if the patient does not wish to purchase one or more additional pairs at the time of the visit, the eyecare professional (ECP) has “planted the seed” for the need for additional eyewear.

Another reason for recommending more than one pair of eyewear is the personal and professional satisfaction you feel from the positive feedback you obtain from patients. This kind of personal and professional fulfillment is invaluable, and it's the kind of thing that makes it a pleasure to come to the office every day.

Lifestyle
Because the term “lifestyle” is so vital to eyewear recommendations, it's worth defining. A lifestyle is a way of living that reflects the activities, attitudes, and values of a person. Lifestyle dispensing is the technique of recommending eyewear for the specific activities your patients engage in and the attitudes and values they have.

To do this, you have to match product features to the person’s lifestyle. Here are a few examples.

FRAME FEATURES

Wrapped Design
Good active eyewear will have a considerable wrap

Just What the Doctor Ordered
Doctors should also be engaged in the “inside-out” lifestyle process—determining patients’ lifestyle activities both indoors and out. The weight the patient gives to a doctor’s recommendation cannot be underestimated. The doctor should mention anti-reflective lens treatments, high-index materials, and the need for high quality prescription or plano sunglasses...to name just a few options.

When the doctor presents this information in a professional manner, and makes these recommendations, sales of these product categories increase dramatically. The doctor’s involvement in recommending eyewear products makes the dispensing optician’s job much easier. While this seems obvious, many doctors overlook it or somehow feel it is unprofessional to make specific recommendations. Suggesting needed products to enhance and protect vision is as important a part of a routine eye exam as the refraction.
design to provide better protection against wind, airborne or flying debris, and extraneous light. The greater the individual's forward motion, the greater the need for coverage. Motorcycling, cycling, sailing, running, and driving a convertible are all activities where a client would benefit from using a wrap design. Good activity-specific frame and lens combinations are designed to give the best possible coverage while allowing for comfortable movement and airflow around the frame, lens, and face. The greater the coverage of the eye and the closer the frame sits to the face, the better the overall protection it will provide. Remember, a wrap style is really a compromise between a traditional pair and a goggle.

**Tough and Durable**

Rocks, elbows, flying debris, tree branches, dust, fists, knees, tennis balls, footballs, soccer balls, and basketballs are just a few of the dangers a pair of glasses might encounter during routine wearing. Combine these threats with those of being stuffed into a gym bag, sat on, wedged into a pocket, and being worn on top of the head, and the frame had better be built to take it all. Sweat, heat, sunlight, and other elements can also take their toll on eyewear. That's why it's important to have frame materials (as well as lens materials, see below) that can handle them. Look for plastic and metal frame materials that are designed to take a punishment.

**Fashionable Design**

No matter how well eyeglasses may perform, if they're not attractive, they will likely be exiled unused to a drawer. Fashion is one of the major factors in why a person buys multiple pairs of eyewear.

Plastic frames have become a fashion staple with an extensive array of possibilities. They range from larger, bolder sunglasses frame designs that house a smaller lens to oversized fashion lenses that continue to dominate the trend for men and women. Color is playing a big part in fashion—from white frames to multiple layers of color. No longer is black the only color to have. Hollywood has made sunglasses the #1 accessory to have in multiple pairs. For the “inside” there is the youthful trend-driven colorful layers of acetate frames, which is balanced by the straightforward conservative black or brown rectangular frame. Depending on your frame of mind or mood for the day, you have plenty to choose from.

Semi-rimless designs are popular too, and they have also become a driving influence in the sports sunwear market. Their bold, sometimes aggressive good looks are even offered with interchangeable lenses that add flexibility and value.

For the active person in need of music motivation there are sunglasses that come with built-in electronics, such as MP3 players.

Rimless eyewear has become the “little black dress” of eyewear. Minimalist styling and freedom for lens shaping makes for go-anywhere eyewear that looks both professional and fashionable.

**Comfortable and Secure**

For eyewear to meet real lifestyle needs, it has to provide solutions to real problems. Quality eyewear products do this by incorporating ergonomically enhanced features. For example:

- Highly specialized soft compound materials grip the skin at the nose and earpieces to reduce slippage.
- Surface variability improves grip at the temples. Ripple effects, serrations, and nubs are strategically placed to counteract slipping.
- Temples are designed around a total fit concept, replacing the traditional skull temple that wraps around the ear. These include modified skull, sport temples, semi-adjustable temple ends, fully adjustable temple ends, cables, and straps. Some may include hinges or be fully hingeless.
- Nose contact areas can be designed as systems rather than individual nosepads and guard arms. Nose contact point systems provide improved variability in fit, comfort, style, and increased overall nose-contact fit.
- Many manufacturers also provide “upgrade” kits that enable the owner to further customize the look of a frame by changing the temple ends and nose-fitting system.

All of these features assure that the frame will stay exactly where it needs to be to provide optimal vision and protection.

**LENS FEATURES**

In many ways, eyewear lenses are more important than the frame that suspends them because they are the means by which the patient sees clearly and comfortably. The following features are essential ingredients
in meeting lifestyle needs. By offering these essential features, they will help you increase your inside-out multiple pair sales.

**Impact-Resistant Lens Material**
One of the most important features of any lens is its resistance to breakage—known as its impact resistance. For the best possible protection, lenses should be capable of withstanding serious impact. One way to recognize lenses that meet this standard is to see if they pass the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z87.1 High Velocity Lens Impact Test. Lens materials like polycarbonate and Trivex meet this standard, as do a few proprietary lens materials from eyewear companies. Offer these lenses to everyone. The more active a person’s lifestyle is, the more they will want to buy them.

**Polarized**
Probably the most popular sun lens option in recent years is polarization. This feature blocks plane polarized glare that is created when light bounces off shiny surfaces such as water, roadways, and automobiles. The result is glare that is significantly reduced or eliminated while the wearer sees clearer with bolder colors and more contrast. Golfers will be able to see the lay of a green better, a boating enthusiast will see the horizon more clearly, drivers will read the road ahead more accurately, and anglers will be able to see subtle water surface variations. All you have to do is demonstrate a polarized lens to your patients, and once they see it, they’ll want it.

**Lens Color**
To meet different lifestyle needs, lens colors should vary by activity, personal preference, and lighting condition inside and out. Yellow is often recommended for low-light situations and for shooting. Brown is often suggested for driving. Blue may be used for golf and tennis, while pink is often suggested for winter sports. Aquamarine may be recommended so skeet targets stand out against the sky. Gray is appropriate for multipurpose use. Look for lenses that have their color throughout the lens material and are not just dyed onto the outer surfaces. You’ll also find some top quality lenses with metal oxides bonded to their surfaces for added color variations.

**Mirror Coating**
In extreme lighting conditions such as being on the water, sand, snow, or open expanses of tarmac, eyeglass wearers need a lens that will significantly reduce the amount of light coming through it. Mirror coatings applied to the front of a lens can help with this by reflecting light away from the eye. You’ll find them in full mirror and flash mirror versions.

As if their function wasn’t enough, mirror coatings have become a huge fashion option in eyewear, especially in sunwear where you’ll find everything from iridescent to multicolored offerings. They really help personalize a pair of eyeglasses.

**Anti-Reflective Treatment**
All eyewear should have an anti-reflective (AR) treatment applied to the lenses. An AR treatment knocks out lens surface reflections while letting more light pass through a lens. The result is better vision and visual comfort in all lighting situations. Modern AR treatments are easy to clean, durable, and scratch resistant. AR treatments also provide the cosmetic advantage of reducing glare that can be so annoying for the wearer and so obvious to an observer.

Most high-end sunwear lenses will have a back-side AR treatment applied. This is because the reflections
off the back surface of a dark lens are much more obvious to the wearer than from a clear lens.

**Photochromic Lenses**

If you're really focused on the inside-out of eyewear, than you know that photochromic lenses are an excellent recommendation. Unlike clear lenses that have no absorptive effect and sun lenses that have a fixed absorptive density, photochromic lenses adjust their absorptive density based on lighting conditions. The most popular version of these lenses changes from near clear to approximately 85% dark outdoors, and it does this in seconds.

The latest innovation in photochromic lenses can be found in the sunwear market. Here you'll find photochromics made specifically for the changing lighting conditions found outdoors. This means that the lenses do not become clear, instead, they become lighter when light conditions are low and sunglass dark when lighting conditions become bright. Anyone who has ever worn sunglasses on a cloudy day when the sun played peek-a-boo will instantly recognize the value of these lenses. This is welcomed news by sports enthusiasts too because their lighting conditions almost never stay constant. These lenses are available in both Rx and plano form.

**Plano Sunwear—A True Necessity**

When you consider people's inside-out eyewear needs, you realize that no one pair of eyewear is truly going to serve them properly. Instead, they need multiple pairs of eyewear to accommodate all their visual and lifestyles activities. While ECPs are comfortable with the concept of recommending multiple pairs of eyewear for their prescription lens patients, they often overlook the fact that their emmetropic patients (those who refract plano in both eyes) have the same exact lifestyle demands. They just don't have a prescription for lenses.

One excellent example of this is the medical need for sunwear. Without ultra-violet-protective lenses, a person's eyes are at risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, and other ocular disorders. Whether your patients need an Rx for lenses or not, they need the protection these lenses provide that can ward off these medical conditions.

Instead of overlooking these patients, ECPs should treat them exactly the same as they do their Rx patients. This means interviewing them for lifestyle needs and wants and recommending appropriate eyewear styles and options.

Remember, plano is an Rx, it just doesn’t have any refractive power.

**Getting the Message Across**

Getting your patient to embrace the inside-out of eyewear and purchase multiple pairs for multiple visual and lifestyle needs starts with you. Multiple pair sales are generated from patient interest; ECP suggestions; careful advertising, marketing and merchandising; and good old-fashioned selling techniques.

Start by assuming that your patient wants the best options you can offer. Assume they are willing to purchase multiple pairs if you demonstrate how they will meet their needs. Your confidence and knowledgeable approach can make the difference between them wanting the dreaded “general use” pair and buying the multiple pairs they really need.

**Learning Their Needs**

Even before any lifestyle questioning begins, look for visual clues to your patient's lifestyle. Is he
wearing anything that tips you off—a polo shirt from a golf club, the insignia of a type of motorcycle, running or yoga clothes, or a beach shirt over tanned skin? If your office allows for a view of the parking lot, look for the kind of car your patient drives. Is it a convertible? Does it have a bike or kayak rack? Does the patient have a sports-specialty key ring or carry a sports-specific pack or purse? These nonverbal clues can be invaluable for getting a feel for the kind of eye-wear you might recommend to the potential buyer.

Another very powerful nonverbal method of learning patient needs is to use a lifestyle questionnaire. This form asks questions about lifestyle interests and activities at work, at home, and for leisure. One appealing aspect of this method is that it can be provided to the patient when checking in to fill out while in the waiting room. It is also a comprehensive list of questions that covers all the eyewear options you offer. Once this form is complete, you’ll have a wonderful starting point for discussing lifestyle needs and corresponding eyewear products.

Some offices prefer to interview patients verbally. This is fine...as long as you ask a comprehensive list of questions to all patients. If you use a verbal interview method, be sure to listen carefully to the answers the patient provides. These are the keys that open the door to eyewear sales.

**Point-of-Purchase**

A good method for helping patients get the “inside-out” message is to use point-of-purchase (POP) items provided to you by ophthalmic product manufacturers. Materials like counter cards, posters, dispensing mats, eyewear displays, and more are useful tools for telling eyewear visitors you have what they want. Make sure that your display is widely varied so patients understand you carry all the options they need.

Remember, as the number of activities a person enjoys increases, so does the need for multiple pairs of eyewear. Discover all of your patients’ lifestyle needs and recommend all the eyewear choices they need. When you do, you will have accomplished the inside-out of eyewear dispensing.

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