

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF EYE CARE PROVIDERS

[Ophthalmologist](#)

[Optometrist](#)

[Low Vision Specialist](#)

[Optician](#)

Ophthalmologist

An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who has specializations in medical and surgical treatment of the eyes and prevention of eye disease. Ophthalmologists are qualified to diagnose and treat all conditions that affect a person's eyes or their vision including performing complex and delicate surgery on your eye. They treat and prescribe medication to improve or prevent further complications from vision related conditions. They can also prescribe eyeglasses and contacts. The ophthalmologist must complete four years of medical school, a one-year internship and three years of residency training in ophthalmology. They are licensed by state regulatory boards and are required to fulfill continuing education requirements.

Optometrist

An optometrist is another professional who is an expert in providing eye care. Optometrists conduct eye examinations, prescribe corrective contact lenses and glasses and diagnose and treat eye diseases and disorders. Many states have passed legislation that permits optometrists to perform

procedures such as laser treatments and injections for macular degeneration. Optometrists must have a bachelor's degree before completing four years of optometry school and some do further training in a specialization. Optometrists are licensed by their state regulatory board and must complete continuing education requirements.

Low Vision Specialist:

A low vision specialist can be a board-certified optometrist, ophthalmologist or a person trained in low vision rehabilitation. These providers have additional credentials or specialization in low vision testing, diagnosis and treatment and can also conduct low vision eye examinations and prescribe special low vision optical and non-optical devices.

You may want to ask the optometrist or doctor you are working with if they have this specialization or can refer you to someone who does. A Low vision specialist can help you determine what devices, services and or accommodations could help maximize your residual vision, independence and quality of life.

Optician:

An optician is an eye care professional who is trained to prepare and dispense eyeglasses, contact lenses and prosthetic eyes). Some opticians also supply low vision optical devices. Several colleges and technical schools offer an associate's degree in opticianry. Other colleges offer a one-year certificate.