

Who to see for your ophthalmic needs

When you go to see an eye care specialist, do you know which type you need? Like any other profession, the eye care field is filled with specialized titles with vastly different credentials and job descriptions.

- The Optician – Opticians are the specialist you need if you need new lenses for your glasses, contact lenses or a device to aid your low vision. They handle everything from the fabrication of the actual lenses to putting them in a frame and helping you to get a good fit.
- Ocularist – These professionals help Trauma victims to fit or fabric a ocular prosthetic. For instance, if you were in an auto accident and lost an eye they would help to fabricate a prosthesis that would be a recreation of the original eye.
- Orthoptist – They specialize in managing ocular disorders like problems with the mobility. This type of disorder is sometimes known as binocular vision. They will sometimes assist an ophthalmologist during surgery but more on them later.
- Optometrist – The general practitioner of the optical community. They are required to have 4 to 5 years of college but are not a medical doctor. Optometrists are the eye care professionals that most people are referring to when they say they are going to the eye doctor. They diagnose common disorders and help to quantify a patient's refractive vision correction or eye glass prescription.
- Ophthalmologist – These professionals are at the top of the eye professional pecking order. Mainly because to become one you are required to have four years of college, four years of medical school and four to six years of residency, internship or some form of specialty training. They are full medical doctors and they specialize in surgical eye care. Also, an interesting piece of trivia is that Ophthalmology was the first branch of medicine to offer board certification, something that all other branches now do.

Many of the fields overlap to some degree so an accident vision may need a Ophthalmologist to do surgery on their eye and have a Orthoptist on hand to help them with any vision disorders that may crop up. If the worst case happens the victim may lose the use of the eye and be sent to an Ocularist to get a prosthesis to replace the lost eye. With any luck, you will never have to visit anyone but your local Optometrist to replace your broken glasses if you accidentally step on them one morning.