

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF EYE CARE PROFESSIONALS

It's important to understand what each type of eye care professional can do for you:

- **Ophthalmologist:** Diagnoses and treats eye diseases, prescribes medications, and performs surgery to improve, or prevent the worsening of, eye and vision-related conditions. An ophthalmologist will have the initials "M.D." after his or her name.
- **Optometrist:** Diagnoses eye diseases and prescribes eyeglasses, contact lenses, low vision devices, vision therapy, and medications to treat eye diseases. An optometrist will have the initials "O.D." after his or her name.
- **Low Vision Specialist:** Many optometrists and some ophthalmologists have an additional specialization in low vision testing, diagnosis, and treatment, and are trained to conduct low vision eye examinations and prescribe special low vision optical devices.
- **Optician:** Fits eyeglasses and, in some states, contact lenses, analyzes and interprets prescriptions written by ophthalmologists or optometrists, and takes eye measurements to ensure that eyeglass prescriptions are correct and fit properly.

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This and other vision loss information is also available online at VisionAWARE.org, a "Self-Help for Vision Loss" website. VisionAWARE is a program of AWARE.

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THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF EYE CARE PROFESSIONALS *(cont.)*

If you do not have an eye doctor, a good way to start is to make an appointment with an **optometrist**, who can diagnose and treat many common eye problems and is similar to a primary care doctor.

If you need surgery or specialty care, the optometrist can refer you to an **ophthalmologist** or a sub-specialist, such as a retinal specialist, who can address specialized treatments, such as those needed for macular degeneration or diabetic retinopathy.

If you're experiencing significant vision loss, a low vision specialist can determine whether special optical and non-optical devices, improved lighting, or other types of specialized services and equipment can help.

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