

Optometry/Ophthalmology Educational and Training Comparison Chart

Degree/Qualifications	Optometrist (OD)	Ophthalmologist (MD)
	Optometry School	Medical School
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Years in length • 572.5 hours of basic sciences coursework (ex: 12-week semester SUNY Optometry School) • No clinical training managing patients with different systemic diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 years in length • 1,352 hours of basic sciences coursework in first 2 years (ex: national average across reporting medical schools) • 2 years of patient care rotations through different specialties, gaining direct experience managing patients in all aspects of medicine.
	Optometry Post Graduate Training	Ophthalmology Residency
Mandatory Post–Graduate Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no mandatory post graduate training. Less than 20% go on to an optional 1 year training program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory additional 4 years in training • 1 year of general medical or surgical internship. • 3 years of accredited ophthalmology residency training program. • minimum 626 hours of additional instruction/lab work on ocular disease and management • 40% of ophthalmologists complete a 1-2 year fellowship program after residency
Clinical Experience During Mandatory Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of 1,910 hours of clinical experience • No minimum requirements for number of patient visits or ocular surgery experience. • No requirements for clinical training or management of complex medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, immune diseases, and neurological disorders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of 17,280 hours of clinical experience after residency completion • Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education requires management of at least 3,000 outpatient visits, minimum operative numbers (364 total surgical procedures), and demonstration of proficiency in performing ocular surgeries and in treating the entire ocular disease spectrum
Profession Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State licensure • Several national boards with highly variable standards. None qualify for membership in the American Board of Medical Specialties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State licensure • National board certification by the American Board of Ophthalmology, a member of the American Board of Medical Specialties. • Recertification mandatory every 10 years for Ophthalmologists certified in 1992 or later.

***Ophthalmologists are medical doctors** who complete four years of medical or osteopathic school followed by a one year hospital based internship and then three years of residency training. Almost half complete an additional one or two years of subspecialty fellowship training. In total, ophthalmologists complete 17,000 to 22,000 hours of office and surgical training with patients who have systemic and ocular disease before they are allowed to treat patients on their own. The formal training of medical school, internship, and surgical residency (8 years), including the experience of treating all systemic disease conditions and exposure to thousands of patients with complex eye pathology, cannot be replaced by optometry school (4 years).

***Optometrists are NOT medical doctors.** Optometrists complete four years of optometry school with exposure to patients who principally need basic eye care services such as exams, refractions and contact lens fittings. Some (less than 20%) complete a one year post graduation program for a total of approximately 2,500 hours of training.