

Doctors of Optometry and their Education

As primary eye care providers, doctors of optometry are an integral part of the health care team, earning their doctoral degree just as dentists, podiatrists and other doctors do.

- Prior to admittance into optometry school, optometrists typically complete four years of undergraduate study, culminating in a bachelor's degree. Required undergraduate coursework for pre-optometry students is extensive and covers a wide variety of advanced health, science and mathematics courses.
- Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, doctoral-level study concentrating on the eye, vision and associated systemic disease. In addition to profession-specific courses, optometrists are required to take systemic health courses that focus on a patient's overall medical condition as it relates to the eyes.
- Upon completion of optometry school, candidates graduate from their accredited college of optometry and hold the doctor of optometry (OD) degree.
- Some optometrists participate in residency programs following optometry school. This experience offers doctors of optometry training in an optometric sub-specialty such as pediatric optometry, low vision care, or geriatrics.

Optometric Education in Practice

- Optometrists must pass a rigorous national examination administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBE). The three-part exam includes basic science, clinical science and patient care.
- All optometrists are required to participate in ongoing continuing education courses to stay current on the latest standards of care.
- Curriculums and continuing education are updated on an ongoing basis to reflect technological advances, including surgery techniques, prescriptive medications and other medical treatments related to eye diseases and disorders.
- In addition to being the experts on eye and vision diseases and disorders, doctors of optometry have the education and training to diagnose the ocular manifestations of diseases that affect the entire body, such as diabetes and hypertension. They also are qualified to evaluate their patients for surgery when appropriate and often manage their patients' care pre- and post-operatively.

