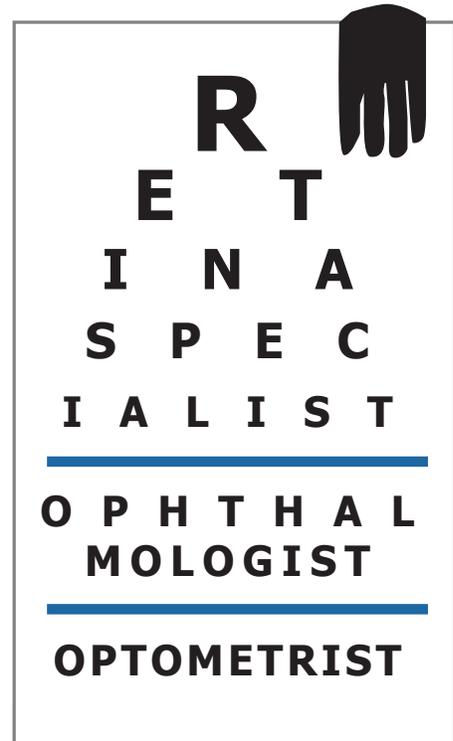


# The 3 Types of Eye Doctors Your Patients May See

In addition to their primary care physician and endocrinologist, patients with diabetes may also see the following eye specialists.

## The Optometrist

The optometrist does not only fit your patients for eyeglasses. They are usually the first line of defense in detecting eye disease. Optometrists are primary vision care providers who test sight, provide corrective lenses, and diagnose and treat some eye problems.<sup>1</sup> However, they complete 3 years or more of college and 4 years of training, after which they receive a doctor of optometry (OD) degree. They are licensed to practice optometry and may refer patients who show certain abnormalities in the eye to a retina specialist or general ophthalmologist.<sup>1</sup> One of the tests they perform is the visual acuity test, which measures how well the patient can see the letters on an eye chart from a distance. They also may perform a dilated eye exam to diagnose or monitor diabetic eye disease.<sup>2</sup>



## The General Ophthalmologist

A general ophthalmologist is an MD who specializes in eye and vision care. As an MD, a general ophthalmologist is licensed to practice medicine and perform surgery. He or she has had at least 8 years of medical training, in addition to graduating from college. He or she can perform the same diagnostic tests as a retina specialist.<sup>1</sup>



**Ensure your patients are appropriately screened for diabetic eye disease, and help protect your patients' vision health.**

## ➔ The Retina Specialist

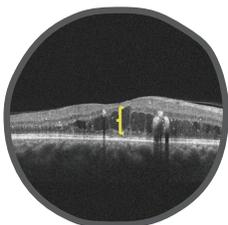
A retina specialist is an MD with a specialty in ophthalmology and a subspecialty in diseases and surgery of the vitreous (the clear gel that fills the space between the retina and the lens) and the retina.<sup>3</sup>

A retina specialist is the best resource to help manage diabetic macular edema (DME) because he or she is trained to diagnose and treat retinal conditions like DME.<sup>3,4</sup>

### Some of the tests an eye doctor will perform include<sup>2,5</sup>:



- **Fluorescein angiography:** A dye injected into the patient's arm passes through the bloodstream to show the blood vessels in the back of the eye



- **Optical coherence tomography:** Imaging is used to show the layers and thickness of the retina



- **Fundus photography:** Shows the inside of the back of the eye



- **Dilated eye exam:** A doctor puts drops in the patient's eye to dilate the pupil. He or she can then see into the back of the eye (including the retina) for signs of problems

**References:** **1.** What is an ophthalmologist? American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO EyeSmart) website. <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/living/what-is-an-ophthalmologist.cfm>. Accessed July 27, 2015. **2.** National Institutes of Health. National Eye Institute. Facts about diabetic eye disease. <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy.asp>. Accessed July 27, 2015. **3.** American Society of Retina Specialists. What is a retina specialist? <https://www.asrs.org/patients/what-is-a-retina-specialist>. Accessed July 27, 2015. **4.** American Academy of Ophthalmology. Seven reasons to refer to a retina specialist. <http://www.aao.org/young-ophthalmologists/go-info/article/seven-reasons-to-refer-to-retina-specialist>. Accessed July 27, 2015. **5.** The American Society of Retina Specialists. Diabetic retinopathy. <http://www.asrs.org/patients/retinal-diseases/3/diabetic-retinopathy>. Accessed March 26, 2015.