Opticians

Opticians test your sight and examine the health of your eyes. Some types of optician are trained to recognise abnormalities and diseases that are revealed in the eye, such as diabetes and glaucoma. After testing your eyes, some opticians will also fit and supply glasses or contact lenses to match your prescription, if they are needed.

How to Find a Local Optician

The **NHS.UK** website allows you to search for a list of local opticians using your postcode.

What to Expect From Your Optician

There are three types of optician:

Optometrists

Optometrists (also called ophthalmic opticians) carry out tests on your eyes to check the quality of your sight; look for signs of eye disease which may need treatment from a doctor or eye surgeon; and prescribe and fit glasses and contact lenses.

Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners

Ophthalmic medical practitioners are medical doctors, who are also trained to carry out eye tests and prescribe glasses.

Dispensing Opticians

Dispensing opticians fit and sell glasses, but do not test eyes. They can give you advice on types of lens, such as single vision or bifocal, and can help you to choose frames.

For information about what happens when you visit your optician for an eye test, visit the **RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)** website **www.rnib.org.uk**

How Often Should I Go To The Optician?

At 40 years old you should have a full eye test with follow-up tests about **every two years** (or more often if recommended by your optometrist). Age increases the risk of cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration, but, if detected early, the development of some diseases can be

slowed or halted.

At 70 years old and over, you should have a full eye test **every year**, even if you think your vision is good.

> Six million older people in the UK are needlessly risking their sight by not having regular eye tests. Sight loss is an avoidable consequence of ageing. Many conditions could be prevented or treated if they are caught early enough. However, 47% per cent of people aged over 60 years and over, fail to have their eyes tested regularly.

If you have any notable change to your vision in between check-ups, you should make an appointment to see your local optician immediately to deal quickly with any symptoms.

Am I Entitled to a Free NHS Eye Test?

If you are aged 60 years old or over, or in receipt of certain benefits, you are entitled to a free eye test. For further information, visit our section on **Help with health costs.**

What if I am housebound?

You can ask to have your eyes tested at home if you are housebound, or if you find it difficult to get out because of illness or disability. If you need an NHS home visit, this should be free of charge if you are aged 60 years old or over.

Specsavers Healthcall are funded by the NHS and provide free eye examinations in the home (including in care homes) for people who are unable to visit a high street optician unaccompanied.

The Outside Clinic can also provide eye examinations in your home. Contact them to find out about the services they offer.

Complaining about Your Optician

Anyone who has received goods or services from an optician that is registered with the General Optical Council can make a complaint. For information on their complaints process contact the **Optical Consumer Complaints Service.**

Wherever possible you should make your complaint directly to the optician who you received the goods or services from, as it may be possible to sort out the problem straightaway. However, if the matter can't be resolved you should write to the Optical Consumer Complaints Service.

If you are unable to make the complaint yourself, you can ask someone else, such as a relative or friend, to make the complaint for you. To do this, the Optical Consumer Complaints Service will require your written authority before the complaint can be registered.

Eye Conditions

For information on specific eye conditions, please see our section on **Visual impairments.**

Tips for Healthy Eyes

For information on how to improve your eye health and to minimise your risk of developing common eye conditions such as age-related macular degeneration and cataracts, read The Eyecare Trust's **Ten Steps to Healthy Eyes.**

Good lighting is key to helping you to make the most of your eyesight. When you are aged 60 years old your eyes need three times as much light as they did when you were 20 years old.

Natural daylight is a really important source of light. You can increase this in your home by:

- keeping the windows clean;
- pulling your curtains back as far as possible; and
- keeping your net curtains clean, or removing them altogether.

For reading or close work, such as sewing, use a flexible table lamp that you can shine down onto your book or work.

Other Useful Organisations

- **NHS 111** is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- **NHS.UK** is a website providing health and medical advice, an online symptom checker and a facility for searching for services near you.

> **Please note** – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact **NHS 111**. In an emergency, dial **999**.

Last updated: July 14, 2020

Useful Organisations

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Email: pals@nhct.nhs.uk

Website: https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/what-is-pals-patient-advice-and-liaison-service/

Telephone: 0800 032 0202

Address: Freepost PALS,

Optical Consumer Complaints Service

Email: enquiries@opticalcomplaints.co.uk

Website: http://www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk

Telephone: 0344 800 5071

Address: 6 Market Square, CM23 3UZ

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: https://www.rnib.org.uk

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Address: The Grimaldi Building, N1 9JE

Specsavers

Email: info@specsavershealthcall.com

Website: http://www.specsavers.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 198 1132

The Outside Clinic

Email: info@outsideclinic.com

Website: www.outsideclinic.com

Telephone: 0800 85 44 77

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Glaucoma UK

Email: h.morrow@iga.org.uk

Website: https://glaucoma.uk/

Telephone: 01233 648 164

Address: High Point Business Village, TN24 8DH

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