

Working life (ophthalmology)

This page provides useful information about the roles and responsibilities of ophthalmology, where they work, who they work with and what they feel about their role.

"I became an ophthalmologist because it allowed me to blend medicine and surgery in a highly technical environment and in a discipline which is evolving. I wanted the challenge of learning new skills and knowledge, and the satisfaction of highly effective treatments. Lower levels of night work, good career prospects and no requirement to initially train in general surgery were also factors in choosing this specialty." - **Consultant ophthalmologist**

A typical day in ophthalmology day may involve any of the following:

- specialty, general or acute clinics
- treatment clinics using laser, intra-ocular or peri-ocular injections (inside or around the eye)
- surgery – performing cataract surgery or other operations in a specialist eye theatre
- clinical collaboration with other health care specialists

Most consultant ophthalmologists have two or three operating sessions per week, and three or four clinic sessions (which may include treatment clinics). Acute clinics (eye A&E) tend to be managed by staff doctors and trainees in regional eye casualty departments with senior advice available as required.

The work is based in operating theatres, outpatient clinics and increasingly in community clinics. There is a small amount of ward work.

On-call and working hours

Ophthalmology is mainly a nine-to-five specialty. Out-of-hours work is lighter than many medical specialties and shift work is unlikely. The specialist nature of eye emergencies means that ophthalmologists are required to be [on call](#) ^[1] but 'hospital at night' generic teams deal with routine ward work out of hours. Small teams are [on call](#) ^[1] overnight and at weekends.

The EU [Working Time Directive](#) ^[2] limits the working week to 48 hours. It is also possible to work part-time once you are consultant, or to train on a less than full-time ^[3]basis (conditions apply).

- **Who you will work with?**

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Ophthalmologists work as part of large multidisciplinary teams.

They work with:

- ophthalmic and vision scientists
- orthoptists and optometrists
- other doctors especially diabetic physicians, rheumatologists and neurologists
- clinical photographers
- eye clinic liaison officers (ECLOs)
- specialist nurses
- secretaries and administrative staff

- **Attractions and challenges of the role**

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The mixture of medical and surgical treatments, variety of work, cutting end technology and involvement in many other disciplines is very rewarding. The patient satisfaction rate is high since most people with eye conditions can be helped. Cataract surgery in particular, which usually allows patients' sight to be fully restored, is very rewarding.

Ophthalmology offers many exciting new developments in diagnosis and treatment, which makes for very rewarding career.

Caring for people who are losing or have lost their sight is challenging. With rapid advances in technology and treatments, new devices and strategies are continually being introduced for diagnosis and treatment. Ophthalmologists therefore have to develop new practical skills throughout their career.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/ophthalmology/working-life>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Working_Time_Directive

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/less-full-time-training-doctors>