

Ophthalmologist

The eye surgeon. Cataracts, glaucoma, retina, lasers. One of the highest paid and most competitive specialties in Canada, with better hours than most surgery.

TYPICAL PAY

\$600,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$350k to \$850k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Eye clinics, hospital operating rooms, surgical centres, private la...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Top marks in biology, chemistry, math and English. A very high average is the entry ticket.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
Any major, usually life sciences. High GPA, research, volunteering. Write the MCAT (medical school admission test).
- 3 Medical school, the MD (doctor of medicine)** 3 to 4 years
Acceptance rates are 5 to 15%. Ophthalmology electives and research in your final year decide the match.
- 4 Ophthalmology residency** 5 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Paid, supervised. Clinic, lasers, then hundreds of cataract operations under supervision.
- 5 Royal College exam, licence, often a fellowship** 1 to 2 years
Pass the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada exam, register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons. Many add a 1 to 2 year fellowship.

Pros and cons

- + One of the highest paid specialties in Canada
- + Better hours and lighter call than almost any other surgery
- + You give people their sight back, often the same day
- One of the most competitive matches, about 40 to 45 spots a year
- About 13 years of training
- High-volume clinic days are a grind

Optional boosts

Retina. Glaucoma. Cornea and refractive. Oculoplastics.

Good to know

The most common operation in Canada

Cataract surgery is performed hundreds of thousands of times a year in Canada, more than any other operation. The cloudy lens is broken up with ultrasound and replaced with a plastic one, usually in about 1...

Patients are awake for eye surgery

Most cataract operations use numbing drops and a light sedative. The patient sees light and colours during the operation and walks out within an hour.

Where these numbers come from

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
CIHI: Physicians in Canada
CaRMS: the residency match
Job Bank: Surgeons, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/ophthalmologist>



Scan for the full clicker