




THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / OFFICE OF THE PROFESSIONS

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TO: New York State Licensed Pharmacists, Registered Pharmacies, Pharmacy and Optometry Associations, and Stakeholders

FROM:   
Dolores A. Cottrell, DDS, MSHA Executive Secretary, Board for Optometry

  
Dina Jazrawi, PharmD, Executive Secretary, Board for Pharmacy

DATE: October 25, 2023

RE: Optometrists Prescribing Pharmaceutical Agents

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On October 17, 2023, the New York State Board of Regents [adopted amendments to the Commissioner's regulations](#), conforming to Chapter 506 of the Laws of 2021, authorizing licensed optometrists, certified by the Department, to treat patients for certain ocular diseases by adding specified oral therapeutic pharmaceutical agents to the list of drugs optometrists are authorized to prescribe.

Effective October 25, 2023, optometrists who qualify for the certification must apply to the Department to have the "O" privilege granted. Optometrists may not prescribe Oral Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agents unless the Department has granted the "O" privilege.

A licensed optometrist's "O" privilege may be verified using the Department's [Online Verification](#) system, which will denote "ORT" under the licensee's additional qualifications. "ORT" is a combined acronym in which the letter "O" represents orals and the letters "RT" (formerly "TUV") represent therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of glaucoma and ocular hypertension, topical therapeutic pharmaceutical agents, and diagnostic pharmaceutical agents.

The privileges are hierarchical. Optometrists must qualify for the "T" privilege (diagnostic) in order to meet the requirements for the "R" (therapeutic) privilege. In order to qualify for the "O" (orals) privilege the optometrist must also meet the requirements for the "T" and "R".

The list on page two summarizes all of the therapeutic pharmaceutical agents licensed optometrists are authorized to prescribe by privilege.

## **Summary of Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agents Optometrists are Authorized to Prescribe**

**Licensed Optometrists with the “R” privilege are able to prescribe the following:**

### **1. Topical therapeutic pharmaceutical agents**

- antibiotic/antimicrobials
- decongestants/anti-allergenics
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents
- steroidal anti-inflammatory agents
- antiviral agents
- hyperosmotic/hypertonic agents
- cycloplegics
- artificial tears and lubricants
- **Immunosuppressive agents – EFFECTIVE October 25, 2023**

### **2. Therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for treatment of Glaucoma & Ocular Hypertension –**

- beta blockers
- alpha agonists
- direct acting cholinergic agents
- **prostaglandin analogs - EFFECTIVE October 25, 2023**
- **carbonic anhydrase inhibitors - EFFECTIVE October 25, 2023**

**In addition to the pharmaceutical agents above in 1 and 2, licensed Optometrists with the “O” privilege are also able to prescribe the following:**

### **3. Oral therapeutic pharmaceutical agents - ALL EFFECTIVE October 25, 2023**

- **Antibiotics:**
  - **amoxicillin/clavulanate potassium**
  - **cephalexin**
  - **azithromycin**
  - **sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim**
  - **doxycycline**
  - **tetracycline**
- **Antiglaucoma agents for the management of acute increases in intraocular pressure:**
  - **acetazolamide**
  - **methazolamide**
- **Antiviral agents used for herpes zoster ophthalmicus:**
  - **valacyclovir**
  - **acyclovir**