

EXPLORING: PHYSICIAN

Overview

Physicians and surgeons diagnose and treat injuries or illnesses. Physicians examine patients; take medical histories; prescribe medications; and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests. Surgeons operate on patients to treat injuries, diseases, and deformities.

Typical Duties:

- ▶ Take a patient's medical history
- ▶ Review test results to identify any abnormal findings
- ▶ Recommend and design a plan of treatment
- ▶ Order tests for nurses or other healthcare staff to perform
- ▶ Update charts and patient information to show current findings
- ▶ Address concerns or answer questions that patients have about their health
- ▶ Help patients take care of their health by discussing topics such as proper nutrition and hygiene

Key Information:

- In 2021 the median salary for physicians was \$208,000 & employment is expected to grow 3% by 2031.
- There are two types of physicians, with corresponding degrees: M.D. (Medical Doctor) and D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine). Both use the same methods of treatment, including drugs and surgery, but D.O.s place additional emphasis on the body's musculoskeletal system, preventive medicine, and holistic (whole-person) patient care. D.O.s are more likely to be primary care physicians, although they can be found in all specialties.
- In addition, Podiatrists (DPM) are a type of physician that attends a separate medical school.

Education Programs

There are 155 accredited MD programs in the U.S. and 17 Canadian MD schools. There are 38 accredited colleges of Osteopathic Medicine in the United States. Both programs include 4 years of medical school and 3 to 7 years in fellowships/ residency programs depending upon specialty.

AAMC provides a listing of all US/Canadian MD schools with admission information through a publication called the [Medical School Admission Requirements](#) (published yearly and at a small cost to user). AACOM provides the [Choose DO Explorer](#), an online feature, with a listing of all DO programs and admission requirements free of charge. Many medical programs operate on a rolling admissions process. Check each program specifically for application details.

Admission Requirements: Knowledge & Strategies

Work with your faculty advisor to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution's individual website for specific requirements!

Note: Some medical schools require additional courses such as English composition, psychology, advanced biology, social sciences, calculus/statistics and Genetics.

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Typical Prerequisites Include:

- ▶ Two semesters of Biology with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of Organic Chemistry with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of Physics with lab

Prepare for and take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

- ▶ It is recommended that you take the test at least one year before you want to go to medical school. Most of those who take the MCAT do so during spring of their third year of college. [Learn more about the MCAT](#) and how to prepare on AAMC's website.
- ▶ Content tested includes:
 - ▷ Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems Section
 - ▷ Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems Section
 - ▷ Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior Section
 - ▷ Critical Analysis & Reasoning Skills

Admission is based on holistic review, involving factors beyond MCAT scores and GPA like:

- ▶ Exposure to medicine, job-shadowing
- ▶ Research experience
- ▶ Leadership and involvement
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Volunteer experience

Additional Tips

- Build relationships: create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember such connections can open opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply. In particular, DO programs occasionally require and often prefer a letter from a practicing DO professional.
- When you submit an application, remember you will do so through a centralized application form: [AMCAS](#) for MD programs and [AACOMAS](#) for DO programs. Note that many students choose to apply to both MD and DO programs.
 - Applicants who are Texas residents wishing to apply to medical schools in Texas will use the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service ([TMDSAS](#)).
- Plan financially: there is a cost associated with taking the MCAT and applying to schools
 - Check out fee waivers for each application service before applying.
- Consider whether gap time would strengthen your application, as the average age of students entering MD or DO programs is now 24 years old.

Want more information?

Schedule an appointment through [Handshake](#) to meet with a career coach, learn more and create plans to meet your goals!