

What you need to know about becoming a **Physician (DO)**

Osteopathic physicians (Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, or DOs) diagnose illness and injury, prescribe and administer treatment, and help patients prevent and manage disease. They are licensed to diagnose, treat, prescribe and perform surgery just like MDs. DOs are different in that they practice osteopathic manipulative medicine—a distinctive system of hands-on diagnosis and treatment, which focuses on the musculoskeletal system. Osteopathic manipulative medicine stems from the belief that structure influences function, meaning imbalance, injury, or other problems in one part of the body will affect function in that area as well as others. DOs use osteopathic manipulation to eliminate or reduce impediments to structure and function to promote the body's own self-healing.

Where do they work?

DOs are often found as primary care providers and have a history of practicing in rural and underserved areas. DOs can also be found in

- Family Medicine
- Internal Medicine
- General Pediatrics
- OBGYN
- Anesthesiology
- Psychiatry
- Surgery
- Emergency Medicine

Osteopathic medical students complete four years of medical school plus three to six years of additional medical training through internships and residencies. While in medical school, students gain hands-on experience through clinical rotations. These rotations may include geriatrics, psychiatry, pediatrics, internal medicine and surgery. Courses such as gross anatomy, pharmacology and medical ethics are typical in a DO program. These courses and rotations prepare students for their residencies as well as the state licensing exams and national boards.

Education

Entrance to DO schools is very competitive.

Academic requirements include

- Biology (BIO 105 and 106)
- General Chemistry (CHE 110 and 111)
- Organic Chemistry (CHE 210 and 211)
- Physics (PHY 110 and 111)
- English (ENG 110)
- Math (MAT 190 and 150)

Recommended courses include

- Anatomy and Physiology (BIO 245 and 345)
- Biochemistry (CHE 310)
- Psychology (PSY 105 and 250)
- Sociology (SOC 150)
- Genetics (BIO 200)

Accepted Student Profile

Osteopathic medical school programs have many applicants and are very competitive. Applicants should have

- High GPAs
- Leadership experience
- Excellent entrance exam scores (MCAT)
- Hands-on patient experience
- Participation in research
- Experience shadowing a practicing DO

Application

DO schools use a centralized application service to apply for admissions. Official transcripts and recommendations must be submitted through the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS).

DO schools require MCAT scores for admission. The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) will evaluate knowledge of and problem-solving skills in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry and physics. These classes should be completed before taking your MCATs.

Web Resources

AACOM Application: aacomas.aacom.org

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine: aacom.org

American Osteopathic Association: osteopathic.org

MCAT: www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat