



# Physician

## Education

The common path to practicing as a physician requires 8 years of education beyond high school and 3 to 8 additional years of internship and residency. Most US medical schools teach allopathic medicine and offer the MD degree, osteopathic schools offer the DO degree. Jefferson is an allopathic medical school.

The minimum educational requirement for entry into medical school is 3 years of college; most applicants, however, have at least a bachelor's degree, and many have advanced degrees. Students spend most of the first 2 years of medical school in laboratories and classrooms, taking courses such as anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, pharmacology, psychology, microbiology, pathology, medical ethics, and laws governing medicine. They also learn to take medical histories, examine patients, and diagnose illnesses. During their last 2 years, students work with patients under the supervision of experienced physicians in hospitals and clinics, learning acute, chronic, preventive, and rehabilitative care. Through rotations in internal medicine, family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, and surgery, and other specialties they gain experience in the diagnosis and treatment of illness.

Following medical school, almost all MDs enter a residency—graduate medical education in a specialty that takes the form of paid on-the-job training, usually based in a hospital. Following residency training, physicians may pursue additional subspecialty (fellowship) training beyond their basic residency training.

The above description is adapted from the US Department of Labor: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos074.htm>

## Licensure and certification

All States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories license physicians. To be licensed, physicians must graduate from an accredited medical school, pass a series of national licensing examinations, and complete 1 to 2 years of graduate medical education. Although physicians licensed in one State usually can get a license to practice in another without further examination, some States limit reciprocity. Graduates of foreign medical schools generally can qualify for licensure after passing an examination and completing a U.S. residency.

MDs seeking board certification in a specialty may spend up to 7 years in residency training, depending on the specialty. A final examination immediately after residency or after 1 or 2 years of practice also is necessary for certification by a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialists (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). The ABMS represents 24 boards related to medical specialties ranging from allergy and immunology to urology. The AOA has approved 18 specialty boards, ranging from anesthesiology to surgery.

For certification in a subspecialty, physicians usually need another 1 to 2 years of residency. Physicians must complete ongoing continuing education and practice improvement activities to maintain their board certification.

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## Roles and functions

Physicians and surgeons diagnose illnesses and prescribe and administer treatment for people suffering from injury or disease. Physicians examine patients, obtain medical histories, and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests. They counsel patients on diet, hygiene, and preventive health care.

Physicians work in one or more of several specialties, including, but not limited to, anesthesiology, family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, urology, and surgery. Administrator, researcher and educator are additional potential roles.

## Practice settings

Physicians practice in a variety of settings such as hospitals, clinics, outpatient facilities, workplaces, schools and colleges, homeless shelters, senior citizen centers, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, etc.

Professional association links for further info on the profession

<http://www.ama-assn.org/>

Link to TJU education program

<http://www.jefferson.edu/jmc/>