



Career Guide  
Office of Health Professions Advising

# Osteopathic Physician (D.O.)

## What is an Osteopathic Physician?

A Doctor of Osteopathy (DOs) is a physician who has a similar training to that of MDs and practices in all the specialties as MDs. The osteopathic philosophy, however, differs somewhat from allopathic medicine. Osteopathic medicine is especially patient oriented and believes in holistic treatment that considers the whole person including the mind, body, and spirit of the patient. Osteopathic medicine also has another treatment modality—Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM)—which is used both for diagnosis and treatment.

## How do I become an Osteopathic Physician?

Medical school programs that offer a D.O. are very competitive. Generally to gain entrance you must have good grades overall and in prerequisite courses; high scores on the aptitude test for medical school (MCAT), and letters of recommendation are also required. Competitive applicants are well-rounded students with leadership skills and volunteer, research, and shadowing experience. An online application is required using an application system known as AACOMAS (see below). After completing a bachelor's degree, students who have been accepted into an osteopathic program then complete 4 years of medical training. This is followed by 3 to 8 years of residency, depending on the specialization. DOs are licensed by the state after passing an examination. They must also pass the Board exams for board certification in a specialty area. About half of all DOs practice in primary care fields.

## What is the job outlook?

The government has projected shortages of doctors in the next 30 years so osteopathic medical schools are trying to include growing numbers of students and several new DO schools are opening. DOs should be especially in demand as shortages in primary care (in which many DOs work) are projected. While income varies by specialty, location, and hours worked, the median income for all DOs is about \$160,000. For the first few years of practice, accumulated student loans from medical school and undergraduate school may offset the higher income of physicians.

## What prerequisite courses do I need?

Prerequisite courses vary only slightly between programs. Osteopathic medical schools typically require 1 year of biology with lab, 1 year of general chemistry with lab, 1 year

of organic chemistry with lab, 1 year of physics with lab, 1 year of English (including at least 1 semester of composition), and several social science/humanities courses. Some programs may also require or recommend calculus, biochemistry, and behavioral science (psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology). All required courses must have a minimum grade of a C. Additional information on each college's requirements can be found on the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) website at <http://www.aacom.org/data/cib/index.html>.

### Prerequisite Course Equivalencies at Purdue University

1 year of Biology	Biol 110 & 111 <b>OR</b> Biol 131, 231/232 & 242
1 year of General Chemistry	CHM 115-116 <b>OR</b> CHM 125-126 <b>OR</b> CHM 123-124
1 year of Organic Chemistry	CHM 255/255L-256/256L <b>OR</b> CHM 261/263 & 252/264
1 year of Physics	PHYS 220 & 221 <b>OR</b> PHYS 172 & 272
1 year of English	ENGL 106 <b>OR</b> ENGL 108 <b>AND</b> another English course

### What else do I need to do before I apply?

Generally osteopathic medical schools will expect to see that you have spent time observing an osteopathic physician (shadowing) and often want a letter from a DO. You should also have a record of service to others. Research, while not required, is viewed favorably. Health care experience, both hands on and observational, is important. Medical schools (both allopathic and osteopathic) also require an aptitude test, the MCAT, for application. Applying to osteopathic medical school is expensive so you should plan ahead for the \$1000-2000 of application costs.

### How do I apply?

The primary application is made through an online service called AACOMAS which is sponsored by the AACOM. If you are applying to schools in Texas, you will also need to complete the TMDSAS. We recommend that you collect your recommendation letters using the Health Professions Advising Office professional file service. We can then submit your letters electronically to the medical schools. After the primary application has been received, the medical schools take over and you may then be asked to submit a secondary application directly to them. An interview will hopefully be requested at that point.

### Where can I get more information?

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine <http://www.aacom.org>  
 American Association of Medical Colleges (*for MCAT info*) <http://www.aamc.org>  
 TMDSAS (*for application in Texas*) <http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas>  
 American Osteopathic Association <http://www.osteopathic.org/>

#### Programs in the region:

Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine (Midwestern University) <http://www.midwestern.edu/CCOM/CCOMmain.asp>  
 Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine <http://www.oucom.ohiou.edu/>

For more information about osteopathic medical programs or your interests in the health professions, contact the Health Professions Advisor, Amy Terstriep, Ph.D., at 765-494-4747 or [prehealth@purdue.edu](mailto:prehealth@purdue.edu).

Information for this career guide came from [www.explorehealthcareers.org](http://www.explorehealthcareers.org), the above websites, and those of individual schools.