

# THINKING ABOUT MEDICAL SCHOOL?



Queen's  
UNIVERSITY

STUDENT AFFAIRS  
Career Services

*Learn where to start, what's involved, and where to find helpful resources*

If you are thinking about a career as a medical doctor (MD), the information in this tipsheet can be a great place to learn more about the profession and the requirements for applying to medical school. While there are many different types of MDs, attending medical school is a requirement to become an MD in Canada. Applying to medical school involves many steps and some planning. Below you will find information about the basic requirements for applying to medical school. If you are currently applying to medical school, check out the "Applying to Medical School?" tipsheet.

## Choosing an Undergraduate Program

A common misconception about applying to medical school, is that you need to have completed an undergraduate degree in health sciences or life sciences. There is no specific undergraduate program required to be accepted into medical school. Instead, consider choosing an undergraduate program that interests you. When you enroll in a program you find interesting, you are more likely to excel and achieve better marks. Earning a high grade-point average (GPA) is especially important because medical schools have high GPA requirements for admission.

While there is no requirement to graduate from a specific undergraduate program, some medical schools require certain undergraduate courses as prerequisites for admission. For example, some schools will require a certain number of credits in organic chemistry and/or statistics. To make sure that you can apply to as many schools as possible, you may want to learn about and include any desired prerequisites in your program of study. Every medical school has slightly different prerequisites, so always check each specific school to ensure you will meet the most up-to-date admission requirements. You may also want to consider taking courses that will help you prepare for the subject knowledge tested in the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). More information about the MCAT can be found below.

## Learn About the Profession

Consider learning more about becoming an MD by conducting [information interviews](#) with doctors, residents, and medical students. You can ask your family physician for an appointment to discuss your career goals and their experience in the field. You may also choose to reach out to current medical students and/or residents to learn more about their experience and area of specialization. Learning about the day-to-day work, different specialties, and experience of being in medical school can be helpful when deciding if becoming an MD is the right career path for you. Be realistic and informed by also exploring other career options that interest you in addition to the role of a physician.

## Aim High Academically

The reality of medical school admissions today is that your undergraduate grades, even if you have continued your education beyond your undergrad, are an extremely important part of the process. Most medical schools require very high GPAs for admission. In addition, different schools calculate GPAs in different ways. Be sure to check how each program calculates applicants' GPAs.

## Learn about the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

The MCAT is a requirement for admission to most medical schools. The MCAT is a standardized test that evaluates your knowledge of both the physical and biological sciences, your verbal reasoning and writing skills, as well as your understanding of psychological, social, and biological influences on human behavior. This computer-based test takes approximately 7.5 hours to complete. Many applicants choose to study for and take the MCAT a year prior to when they plan to apply. This strategy allows them to know their score well in advance of application deadlines and gives ample time to retake the test, if necessary. If you decide to write the MCAT, you can study by yourself or take an MCAT preparatory course. Both methods have worked for students in the past.

## Learn About the Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Characteristics (CASPer) Test

The CASPer test is a new addition to some medical school applications. CASPer is an online test used to understand the applicant's behavioural tendencies, based on their responses to different, difficult situations that can arise in everyday life. The CASPer test is broken up into different sections where the test taker either reads or watches a situation and then answers questions (typed or verbally) about how they would respond. The answers to these questions measure the following traits: ethics, empathy, equity, communication, collaboration, professionalism, and judgement. The CASPer test takes place entirely online.

## Get Involved

Despite having busy working lives, MDs are active and visible members of their communities. The ability to balance academics with employment, volunteer work, and extra-curricular interests is a trait that application committees are looking for in prospective medical students. Successful candidates often show long-term commitment to different activities that showcase their ability to progress to leadership positions and their ability to work with different groups of people. Become involved in your community and in activities that you are passionate about.

## Other Things to Consider

- In Canada, preference is given to applicants who apply to medical schools located in their province of residence. This preference may inform where you apply.
- Applying to medical school can be expensive. There are fees not only for applying, but also for writing the MCAT and CASPer tests, and for requesting official transcripts.
- Medical school and residency typically take eight years to complete. You may want to consider whether this commitment aligns with your other life goals.

## Related Careers

Sometimes people choose careers that are related to medicine that do not involve going to medical school. Some of these careers include

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| ○ Naturopath      | ○ Dietitian          |
| ○ Nurse           | ○ Chiropractor       |
| ○ Practitioner    | ○ Athletic therapist |
| ○ Physiotherapist | ○ Dentist            |
| ○ Pharmacist      |                      |

- Health Care Administrator
- Optometrist
- Personal Trainer
- Bioethicist
- Orthodontist
- Epidemiologist
- Gerontologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Cardiovascular Technician
- Coroner
- Diagnostic Medical Sonographer
- Medical Imaging Tech
- Midwife
- Paramedic
- Perfusionist
- Phlebotomist
- Clinical Researcher
- Prosthetist or Orthotist
- Chiropractist
- Genetic counsellor
- Public policy analyst
- Speech-language pathologist

### Still Have Questions?

If you are unsure about whether applying and attending medical school should be part of your career path, reach out to Career Services. You can book a 1-1 appointment through [MyCareer](#).

### Online Resources

Canadian Federation of Medical Students [www.cfms.org/](http://www.cfms.org/)

Medical Council of Canada <http://www.mcc.ca/>

Ontario Medical Association <https://www.oma.org/>

College of Physicians and Surgeons (Ontario) <http://www.royalcollege.ca/>

The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada <https://www.afmc.ca/>

Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS) [www.ouac.on.ca/omsas/](http://www.ouac.on.ca/omsas/)

CanMEDS Framework <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/canmeds/canmeds-framework-e>