

MD or DO

Which doctor is right for you?

A DO – or doctor of osteopathic medicine – is one of two types of fully licensed doctors in the U.S. DOs practice their patient-centered philosophy of care in every medical specialty. These physicians emphasize treating the whole person, taking into account a patient's lifestyle and environment, as well as their physical and psychological health. Learning the difference in training and philosophy of care between an MD and a DO can help you find the right physician for you and your family.

Both MDs and DOs:



Are licensed to practice in all 50 states



Must complete four years of basic medical education



Complete training in their specialty including internships, residencies and fellowships



Must pass state licensing exams



Can practice in any specialty



Use evidence-based methods of treatment



Can prescribe medication

MD

- MD stands for “Doctor of Medicine.”
- An MD has attended and graduated from a conventional, or allopathic, medical school.
- MDs account for 93% of actively licensed physicians in the U.S.¹
- Focus on making a diagnosis and treating the symptoms and illness.

DO

- DO stands for “Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine.”
- An DO has attended and graduated from a school of osteopathic medicine.
- DOs account for 7% of actively licensed physicians in the U.S.¹
- Focus on the whole person and their lifestyle for treating a condition.

Did you know? DOs receive additional training in the musculoskeletal system and osteopathic manipulative treatment, or OMT. This system of care involves using the hands to diagnose, treat and prevent illness or injury. As a treatment, OMT attempts to correct structural imbalance through manipulation.

¹Journal of Medical Regulation: A Census of Actively Licensed Physicians in the United States, 2016 <https://www.fsmb.org/Media/Default/PDF/Census/2016census.pdf>