

## Getting into Medical School

Revised by Alicia Bergfeld  
AIMS Senior Test Administrator

Thinking about going to medical school? You are not alone. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) more than 40,000 people apply to U.S. medical schools each year. Before you join the crowd, consider these questions:

### How hard is it to get into medical school?

The competition is intense. Only one in three recent applicants matriculated. Using information from medical school admissions offices, the following table shows acceptance rates for some medical schools.

Medical School	Applicants Accepted
Baylor	3.5 %
Harvard	2.5 %
Stanford	1.3 %
Texas A&M	3.4 %
Texas Tech	4.6 %
Tulane	2.5 %
U of Arkansas	12.6 %
U of Oklahoma	12.7 %
UT at Southwestern	6.3 %
Washington U in St. Louis	3.0 %

### How should I prepare for medical school?

If you know you want to go to medical school, it is never too early to begin preparing.

**In high school:** Take extra science courses, both to see if you are really interested in science and to prepare yourself for college pre-med courses.

Participate in extracurricular activities.

Put yourself in a position to get into a good college. (Keep your grades up!)

**In college:** Choose a college with a successful track record for getting its graduates into medical school.

Choose a college major that interests you and allows you broad exposure to the arts and humanities.

Maintain at least a 3.5 GPA, and invest extra effort in the required pre-med science courses.

Get involved in summer programs (academic, volunteer, or employment) that will expose you to a medical environment.

Take part in campus activities that will encourage you to lead a well-rounded lifestyle.

Develop personal relationships with your professors and pre-med advisors.

Many students think they must major in biology to qualify for medical school. Not true! Biological science majors comprise only about 40 percent of accepted medical school applicants. Of those who have a Physical Science background, 46% were accepted into medical school. Non-science majors comprised nearly 13 percent of applicants, with 45.5% of these applicants accepted into medical school. Good preparation for medical school involves doing well in a major that interests and motivates you, as well as providing you with a well-rounded education.

Keep in mind that whatever you select as your major, you must excel in the pre-med science courses, including both organic and inorganic chemistry, biology, and physics. You should complete your required science courses before your senior year of college.

### How should I choose a medical school?

Because getting into medical school is so difficult, you will need to apply to nine or ten schools and hope that one chooses you. Make your life easier by only applying to the medical schools where you meet the admittance requirements. *Medical School Admission Requirements*, published every year by the AAMC, is an authoritative source to check for information on what various medical schools require for admission. All medical schools will need to see your college GPA (Grade Point Average) and MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) scores. The following table, published by the AAMC, will give you an idea of the numbers accepted by some medical schools.

Medical School	Mean MCAT Accepted	Mean GPA Accepted
Baylor	11.3	3.8
Harvard	11.7	3.87
Stanford	11.4	3.71
Texas A&M	9.7	3.72
Texas Tech	10	3.66
Tulane	10	3.54
U of Arkansas	9.7	3.69
U of Oklahoma	9.7	3.73
UT/Southwestern	11.3	3.83
Washington U in St. Louis	12.3	3.91

Consider your own MCAT scores and GPA as you evaluate medical schools. Also ask yourself: Which medical schools' students are most like me in ability and interests? Which medical schools tend to accept graduates from my undergraduate college? Which medical schools match my budget? Which medical schools have the curriculum that fulfills my needs? You need to do some serious research about the medical schools that interest you. Talk to physicians for their opinions about medical schools. Take advantage of resources at libraries and bookstores. In addition to publications from the Association of American Medical Colleges, consider *Barron's Guide to Medical and Dental Schools* by Saul Wischnitzer and *Getting into Medical School* by Sanford J. Brown. Kaplan Educational Centers publishes *The Road to Medical School*, and *REA's Authoritative Guide to Medical and Dental Schools* includes information on schools of osteopathy, chiropractic, and podiatry.

### **What is the application process for medical school?**

Start the application process during your junior year of college. Each medical school requires a completed application, MCAT scores, college transcripts, letters of recommendation, and an application essay.

The application                      Some medical schools will want you to submit your application online through the AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service: [www.aamc.org/students/amcas](http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas)) and some will require that you send your applications directly to the school.

However you submit your application, make sure that it is completed correctly and neatly and that you use the space provided for comments wisely. Submit your applications as early as possible. Most medical schools begin accepting applications the June before a student's senior year.

The MCAT                                Take the MCAT in the spring of your junior year of college. You should begin preparing through online prep courses and prep books such as those provided by Kaplan about six months before you take it (<http://www.kaptest.com/lsat>).

Letters of recommendation        Gather meaningful letters of recommendation from your professors and advisors. AIMS President and Chief Scientist, Irvin Shambaugh, recommends that a good letter by someone in a position to thoughtfully evaluate your performance and personal qualities is more effective than a letter by someone who barely knows you and who can provide little personal information about your strengths and weaknesses.

### **What happens after I apply?**

After you submit your application packages, call to make sure that each medical school received your complete package. Then, you wait. Each medical school has a lot of applications

to consider, and this process takes time. Remember, everybody who applied submitted nine to eleven applications each.

Admissions committees generally consider the following:

**GPA** – Your GPA is very important, but grade inflation is taken into account. Committee members understand that an “A” doesn’t mean the same thing at every school.

**Undergraduate college** – Graduating from the very best college will not guarantee your acceptance into medical school, but it is true that some colleges have better-than-average track records for feeding their graduates into medical schools.

**MCAT scores** – Your MCAT score is the most objective measure by which a committee can judge your ability.

**Application package** – The application package is your chance to sell yourself to a committee. Committee members consider your application, essay, list of accomplishments, letters of recommendation, and a personal interview.

Finally, admission committee members ask themselves some questions as they consider your application: Can he or she get through our program? Is the applicant stable and responsible? Why admit this particular applicant rather than another one who is equally qualified?

Prepare yourself for the worst while you wait to hear from the medical schools. When the acceptance letters go out, you may be one of the well prepared, qualified, and deserving applicants who was not accepted anywhere.

### **What if I don’t get into medical school?**

If you are not accepted into medical school on the first try, you do have options. You can try again the following year, or you can consider another health-related profession. Re-examine your goals and ask yourself how much you really want to be a doctor and why. You may find that you would be truly satisfied in another health-related field, such as nursing, dentistry, orthodontics, physical therapy, or hospital administration. Just because you are not a doctor does not mean you cannot contribute to the health care field.

You also may discover that being in a health care occupation is less important to you than you thought. Ask yourself what you really want. Is it professional status? Is it kills to help other people? Is it high income? Investigate careers outside the field of medicine to see if they meet your needs.

### **A final word**

Getting into medical school is not easy. Make sure it is the right choice for you before you apply. AIMS has tested many students considering medical school. Our testing can indicate if you have the aptitudes typical of successful doctors who are satisfied with their work. By providing you with information about your natural abilities, aptitude scores might pinpoint the

specialties that best suit you. Most surgeons, for example, possess Structural Visualization, an aptitude for picturing three-dimensional structures, and Instrument Dexterity, and aptitude for using small tools. Specialists in internal medicine usually score high on one or both tests for Convergent Thinking. The Convergent Thinking aptitudes are used when looking for relationships among seemingly unrelated facts. Diagnosing and analyzing illnesses are productive ways to use these aptitudes.

If you are uncertain about your aptitudes, consider the testing program at AIMS. You can see if your aptitudes match those of physicians and if you are suited for certain specializations. If you do not have ideal aptitudes for medicine, you can learn what your weaknesses are and how to compensate for them. Finally, if you decide not to go to medical school or if no medical school accepts you, you can explore alternatives.