

# Perseverance is part of becoming a doctor *Why do Doctors wear white coats?*

Doctors aspire to keep their communities healthy and safe. According to the 2018 Survey of America's Physicians Practice Patterns & Perspectives, the average primary care doctor sees 20.2 patients per day. Indeed, estimates suggest each doctor has roughly 2,000 people under his or her care and spends about 22 minutes with a patient during the average appointment.

Medical students travel a long road of study and practical application before they become doctors. Physicians diagnose and treat diseases, illnesses and injuries. They also interpret diagnostic tests and may counsel patients on preventive health care and healthy living. This requires immense knowledge, so it should come as no surprise that the road to becoming a licensed doctor is so challenging and lengthy.

There are few professions with higher stakes than the field of medicine, which is one reason why the process of becoming a doctor requires years of hard work and tremendous patience. Requirements for becoming a physician vary by country, so for the purpose of this article, the process outlined refers to licensure in the United States.

### Undergraduate degree

The path to being a doctor starts at a four-year undergraduate program, says Indeed.



Students may get their degrees in Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Psychology, or even Nursing. Data assembled by the American Association of Medical Colleges showed that, in 2019, 58 percent of those who took the Medical College Admissions Test majored in biological sciences. Medical schools have a significant number of academic prerequisites and likely will require premed classes in college, so it's essential to find a college that can accommodate this career path.

### Participate in extracurricular activities

The road to medical school is competitive, so applicants should set themselves apart with résumés that include activities that go beyond study. These activities will help candidates appear well-rounded.

### Take MCATs and get into school

The Medical College Admission Test are akin to the Graduate Record Examinations (GREs) for aspiring

medical students. Med schools use the MCAT to screen applicants, so it is essential for premeds to do well.

Medical school is an additional four-year commitment. Aspiring physicians can attend research-oriented institutions or those that focus on primary care. They also can choose between Medical Doctor or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degrees. Both programs include a mix of clinical rotations and medical science courses.

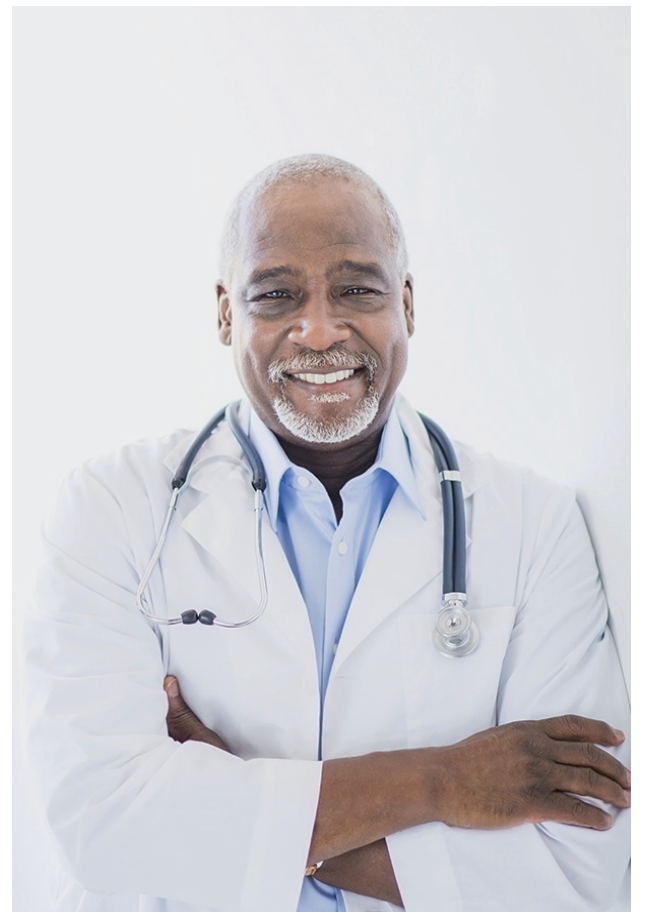
### Residency

The University of Medicine and Health Sciences says newly licensed doctors need to go through several additional years of post-graduate training in specialties of their choosing, called medical residency, after graduating from medical school. This program takes place in a hospital or academic setting. Residency can be an additional three to seven years, depending on the specialty.

Certain uniforms have become synonymous with particular professions. Men and women who share the word of faith don clerical collars and habits. Police officers on patrol typically wear dark blue slacks and shirts with a badge affixed to the front. Construction workers are often recognizable by their hard hats. Perhaps no profession is more widely spotted by the clothing they don than doctors, whose white coats tend set them apart from other health care workers.

Most medical schools conduct some sort of white coat ceremony for their students. It often is a poignant moment when medical students receive their coats after many years of education and training. In the largest study of its kind, researchers at the University of Michigan surveyed 4,000 patients at 10 academic medical centers in the United States and found that a physician's clothing affects how patients view their doctors and how satisfied they are with their care. Physicians who wear white coats as opposed to business attire were deemed more trustworthy, knowledgeable, caring, and approachable, most notably among patients age 65 and older.

The American Medical Association Journal of Ethics says the physician's white coat has served as a



symbol of doctors for more than 100 years. The white coat can be traced to the word "candidus," which in Latin means "white." Initially all ancient Romans seeking public office as "candidates" (a word derived from candidus) wore white togas. The symbol for justice also shows a white toga.

Notably, prior to the nineteenth century, physicians dressed themselves in black, as it was considered formal attire similar to the clergy or how one might wear a black tuxedo to a special event. But the association with uncleanness and death that surrounds the color

black, as well as the concept of antiseptis that was taking hold in Europe after the discoveries of Joseph Lister, changed this. Medicine was moving in a different direction. To promote a greater sense of cleanliness and sterility, doctors began wearing white coats and nurses wore white caps and aprons. Eventually the white coat became a symbol of medical authority, respect and trust.

Many doctors wear white coats to symbolize the noble calling to medicine. It is a recognizable piece of clothing, and one that continues to be seen more than a century after its introduction.

HAPPY  
**DOCTORS'**  
 DAY  
 MARCH 30

As we commemorate National Doctors' Day and look forward to the year ahead, our gratitude extends to the remarkable physicians within our team. Day in and day out, these professionals dedicate themselves to the well-being of patients and their families. Their expertise, coupled with genuine compassion, plays a pivotal role in the health and comfort of those in their care.

We honor their commitment to both their colleagues and patients, acknowledging the trust and confidence placed in their capable hands.

To thank your Guthrie doctor today, visit [www.Guthrie.org/gratitude](http://www.Guthrie.org/gratitude).

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