

# MD vs DO

## Definition

**MD's** practice allopathic medicine, the classical form of medicine, focused on the diagnosis and treatment of human diseases.

**DO's** practice osteopathic medicine which is centered around a more holistic view of medicine in which the focus is on seeing the patient as a "whole person" to reach a diagnosis, rather than treating the symptoms alone. The belief is that all parts of the body work together and influence each other.

## Further Description

When one decides to become a doctor, there are actually two ways to achieve the title of doctor and practice medicine. One can become a medical doctor (MD) or a doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO). Both licenses allow one to practice medicine and have equally rigorous testing. The differences between a MD and a DO lie primarily in philosophy on how to practice medicine.

Both MDs and DOs tend to begin training by getting a four-year undergraduate degree, either in pre-med, or in a related science field. Each type of doctor will then complete four years of training before taking examinations that will result in licensure. Either type of doctor may then choose to specialize in a particular field and study for two to six more years. The doctor who specializes will then take further examinations to be licensed by the board of his or her specialty.

In most cases, the four years of medical school are quite similar. Both have to take courses in Anatomy, Bio-Chemistry, Pharmacology, Histology, Pathology, Physiology, Embryology, and many other common courses. However, the DO receives further training in the muscular and skeletal system, and also in muscular and skeletal manipulation. A doctor who is a DO tends to evaluate a person's health in terms of viewing the body as a complex related network. Any disease affects the whole body. The MD, conversely, may evaluate the disease in terms of how it affects certain parts of the body only.

Emphasis in training a doctor of osteopathy is given to preventative care and on the philosophy of taking time with patients to assess their total health and total health needs. This does not mean that the DO cannot prescribe medicines and treat a disease with equal competency. It does however mean that the DO may consider alternative approaches to treating disease, and may be more apt to consider the disease as a dysfunction of the total working of the body.

The DO also practices osteopathic manipulation treatment (OMT), which means slight manipulations of the spine or simply laying hands on the body to confirm diagnosis. This method of diagnosis may take slightly more time than that of the traditional MD symptoms and tests diagnosis.