

Board Examinations and Licensure

Osteopathic physicians are eligible for licensure in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, other territories and areas of the United States, and many foreign countries. Licensure is determined by each state through the appropriate licensing board.

In order to be licensed as an osteopathic physician, one must:

- Graduate from an accredited U.S. college of osteopathic medicine.
- Successfully complete a licensure exam sequence accepted by a state's licensing board (COMLEX-USA or USMLE).
- Successfully complete one to three years of graduate medical education (varies by individual state requirement).

Following residency training, the osteopathic physician takes certification examinations from the specialty board that oversees her/his particular specialty. Board certification is required by many hospitals for hospital staff membership, and by many health insurance companies in order for the physician to obtain reimbursement from third-party payers.

Osteopathic physicians stay abreast of the latest medical developments related to their specialty training through continuing medical education programs. CME requirements are determined by each state's licensure board. The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) also requires its members to complete a certain number of CME credits to maintain board certification.

For state-specific licensure information, please visit www.fsmb.org/usmle_eliinitial.html.

To learn more about CME through the AOA, please visit www.osteopathic.org.

Information on various osteopathic specialties and subspecialties is available at: www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-dos/do-certification/.

In addition to full licensure in the United States, many foreign countries recognize the American DO degree and grant full licensure to American-trained DOs who wish to

practice internationally. The scope of licensure is determined by each country. For more information, visit DOs Around the World on the AOA website at www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-dos/dos-around-the-world/.

Medical Licensure Exams

Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensure Exam (COMLEX-USA)

The COMLEX-USA, or Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensure Exam, is a standardized test of medical knowledge. The goal of the exam is to assess competency in the areas of study related to practicing medicine. It tests the medical knowledge and clinical skills that are considered essential for an osteopathic physician to practice medicine without supervision. The COMLEX-USA includes standardized test questions, and a pass/fail observed examination performed by the student.

The Comprehensive Osteopathic Licensure Examination (COMLEX-USA), Levels 1, 2 Cognitive Evaluation and Performance Evaluation (CE and PE) and 3, are administered by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME). Level I of the exam is taken by the end of the second year of medical school prior to the last two years of clerkship training. Level 2-CE is taken at the end of the clinical clerkship years prior to graduating from osteopathic medical school.

COMLEX-USA Level 2-PE is an examination developed to test physical examination skills and is also taken prior to graduation. Level 3 is taken prior to the end of the internship year.

COMLEX-USA Level 1 and 2 (CE and PE) are required for graduation from an osteopathic medical college. Each of the osteopathic colleges has its own requirements for progression through the stages of the COMLEX-USA before graduation.

The National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) is the organization that administers the COMLEX-USA exam. The NBOME is a separate organization from the colleges of osteopathic medicine and has as its role the protection of the public. All 50 states in the United States accept COMLEX-USA as a licensure exam for the practice of medicine by osteopathic physicians.

To learn more about the COMLEX-USA exam, please visit www.nbome.org.

United States Medical Licensure Examination (USMLE)

Osteopathic medical students and residents also are eligible to take the United States Medical Licensure Examination (USMLE), which is taken by students in allopathic (MD-granting) medical schools.

The USMLE examination consists of Step 1, Step 2 CK and CS (Clinical Knowledge and Clinical Skills), and Step 3.

To learn more about the USMLE exam, please visit www.usmle.org.

