

# Information for High School Students



## High school students — Learn what you can do now to prepare for a future career in medicine.

### What can I do to prepare academically?

The best thing you can do is build a good foundation of math and science coursework and, if available, take advanced classes. You may be able to receive Advanced Placement (AP) credit that could allow you to place out of basic requirements and move into upper-level coursework once you begin college. AP science and math options at your school may include biology, chemistry, physics, calculus, and statistics. Upper-level psychology classes are also recommended, as they will help you prepare for the behavioral science section of the MCAT®. These classes can help you determine your level of interest in science and if you want to pursue a medical career.

Also use this time to develop solid study habits, time management skills, test-taking skills, and written and verbal communication skills. English classes are a good place to practice these communication skills, since the curriculum often includes writing multiple styles of essays, analyzing literature, giving oral presentations, and taking comprehension tests. You will use these skills as you write your application to medical

school, and physicians use these skills every day to write reports and communicate with colleagues and patients.

Lastly, establishing strong relationships with your teachers or other potential mentors is important; they can help you if you are struggling, push you to be your best, and teach you effective studying habits you can use throughout your education.

### What extracurricular opportunities should I look for?

Look for opportunities to volunteer in a medical setting, shadow a doctor, or work in medical research. The best opportunities are ones you can sustain over time and in which you can build relationships, such as volunteering at a hospital for a semester or longer, instead of for a one-time event. These activities will demonstrate your interest in medicine when you apply to college and when you ultimately apply to medical school. Such experiences also will enable you to meet potential mentors who can motivate you and help you develop your skills. Learn more about these opportunities at [aamc.org/getting-experience](https://www.aamc.org/getting-experience).

### How do I find out about these experiences?

A good place to start is your guidance counselor or science teachers. They may know of programs or opportunities for high school students. Be wary of any program that requires you to pay a high fee to participate. It's a good idea to speak to other participants or volunteers to learn about the organization, the work, and how they feel about their experience. You also can see if any service organizations, hospitals, or clinics in your area need help. Even if you don't have direct access to patients, just being in a medical environment will be worthwhile. If possible, show not only sustained time with an experience or organization but also growth in your role and responsibilities. Jane Cary, retired director of science and technology advising at Williams College, notes, "You may always ask your family physician or pediatrician if you can observe him or her. Younger students are frequently drawn to medicine as a career by positive interaction with their own physicians."

### What summer programs or internships are available to high school students?

The AAMC provides a list of summer enrichment and pipeline programs here: [services.aamc.org/summerprograms](https://services.aamc.org/summerprograms). Under "education level" choose "high school level."

Keep in mind, there are many opportunities to participate in summer programs at the college level. For example, college freshman and sophomore students who meet the eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply to the Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP). SHPEP is a FREE summer enrichment program that prepares college students for a career

in the health professions by enhancing their academic proficiency and providing career development opportunities. Participation in SHPEP may better position students for acceptance into advanced-degree programs. Learn more at [shpep.org](https://shpep.org).

### What should I consider when applying to colleges?

Most U.S. colleges will offer the required and recommended prerequisite courses sought by medical schools. You also may wish to tour the lab facilities and science department classrooms. Consider whether your potential colleges have prehealth advisors, prehealth clubs, or other helpful resources on campus or in the community that will help you sustain your motivation and meet your goals.

If you're already sure you want to be a doctor, you may consider BS-MD programs ([aamc.org/bsmd-program](https://aamc.org/bsmd-program)), which combine undergraduate school with medical school to award you both a bachelor's degree and medical degree. These programs last six to nine years, and requirements vary from program to program. These programs are available to only an extremely limited number of students. Learn more about specific programs by viewing their school profiles on the AAMC Medical School Admission Requirements™ website: [aamc.org/msar](https://aamc.org/msar).

### How can I get hands-on patient care experience?

Students who are at least 18 years old can get trained and certified as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) or emergency medical technician (EMT). Learn more about EMT training at [aamc.org/emt](https://aamc.org/emt). With these certifications, a student can begin getting real experience taking care of patients.



For more information, visit [aamc.org/students](https://aamc.org/students).  
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