

Podiatrist

■ Job Description

A doctor of podiatric medicine is concerned with the examination, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and care of the human foot and related structures.

Podiatrists, doctors of medicine and osteopathy, and dentists are the only health professionals with the legal authority to make independent professional judgments, and at their own discretion, administer medical and surgical treatment. Podiatrists may diagnose and treat ailments of the foot, ankle, and soft tissue of the lower leg, and may use local anesthetics and prescribe and administer certain medications. Podiatrists do everything from treating painful corns to reconstructing deformed joints, and replacing destroyed arthritic joints with prosthetic implants. The podiatrist may perform plastic surgery, and may prescribe appliances, devices, or shoes for the correction or relief of foot ailments. The podiatrist performs a valuable service in referring patients to other health care professionals, as many diseases first become evident in the feet. Podiatrists may specialize in sports medicine, podogeriatrics (the elderly), podopediatrics (children), or surgery.

■ Job Settings

Private practice, clinics, hospitals, and government health agencies

■ Projected Need

In Illinois, slower than average employment growth is expected for podiatrists through 2010. Nationally, the number of jobs for podiatrists is expected to grow at an average rate.

More people will turn to podiatrists for foot care as the elderly population grows. Older people have more years of wear and tear on their feet and legs. As a result, they are more prone to foot ailments than younger people. In addition, the increasingly active lifestyles of people of all ages will result in injuries that will spur the demand for care by podiatrists.

Insurance cost controls on specialty health care limit the growth of this occupation. Insurance plans usually pay for diagnostic tests and acute and surgical foot care. However, many do not cover

routine foot care. As a result, podiatric care is more dependent on people having enough money to pay for it than are other medical services.

Opportunities will be best for board-certified podiatrists, since many managed care providers require board certification. Opportunities for newly trained podiatrists will be better in group practices and clinics than in solo practices.

In Illinois, there were 150 people employed in this very small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for podiatrists is \$45.86 per hour. Half of all podiatrists earn between \$30.14 and \$65.27 per hour.

In Illinois, the median wage for podiatrists is \$46.40 per hour.

Wages vary widely in different parts of the country. Self-employed podiatrists must provide for their own health insurance and retirement.

■ Related Careers

The same academic background prepares students to enter professional schools of dentistry, allopathic medicine, osteopathic medicine, optometry, veterinary medicine, and chiropractic medicine.

■ Differences in Training

A minimum of 90 semester hours of prepodiatry education is required for entrance into a college of podiatric medicine. More than 90% of podiatric students have at least a bachelor's degree. Podiatry programs take four years to complete and grant a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M.) degree. The first two years are spent in classroom and laboratory work in anatomy, pharmacology, pathology, chemistry and other basic sciences. During the final two years of the program students gain clinical experience.

There are seven podiatric medical schools in the country. For a list of schools, contact the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine. In Illinois, podiatry is offered at Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine in Chicago.

■ **Related Educational Programs**

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Podiatric Medicine](#)

■ **Credentials**

Podiatrists are licensed after successfully completing a professional program and passing an exam given by the state and/or National Board of Podiatric Examiners.

■ **Advanced Training**

One-, two-, and three-year residencies are available for graduates who desire more training. A master's degree in podiatric surgery, podiatric orthopedics, and podiatric public health after two years of advanced training is beneficial for gaining teaching positions and is recognized by certifying boards for those specialties.

■ **Resources**

American Association of Colleges of Podiatric
Medicine
1350 Piccard Drive, Suite 322
Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 800.922.9266
E-mail: aacpmas@aacpm.org
<http://www.aacpm.org>
Click on "Careerzone."

The association lists scholarships for schools of podiatric medicine across the country. The Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine in Chicago offers a number of scholarship awards ranging from \$500 to \$3,000.

American Podiatric Medical Association
9312 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: 800.275.2762
<http://www.apma.org>
Click on "Careers in Podiatric Medicine."

The association offers over 100 annual scholarships of \$1,000 each to third and fourth year podiatric medicine students. Applicants must be enrolled in one of the seven podiatric medical schools.