

The expenses in the medical school application process can add up

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Medical school can come with a hefty price tag, but it's an investment in your future. The same can be said about the process of applying to medical school.

Prospective medical students will encounter a number of costs along the way to enrolling in a medical school. Here's a look at what those costs are and some ways you can save.

Taking and preparing for the MCAT

Most medical schools require applicants to take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). The exam is offered about 30 times a year. You can register for the exam up to eight days in advance. However, you'll save money if you plan ahead. If you register for the exam at least 15 days in advance, the fee is \$315. If you wait until after that, you'll pay \$370. There are additional fees for those who cancel or take the exam internationally.

In terms of MCAT prep, some prospective medical students spend several thousand dollars. In those instances, they have typically paid for an in-person prep course. Lower-cost options such as review books and online courses are also available.

What it costs to apply

For the vast majority of medical schools, prospective medical students will submit their applications through the American Medical College Application Service. It requires a \$170 application fee for the first school you apply to, and \$39 for each additional medical school application.

The average medical school applicant applied to 16 schools in 2018–2019, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. That adds up to more than \$750 in application costs, and that figure doesn't include additional charges such as fees for transmitting your undergraduate transcript to medical schools.

If those fees sound daunting, there is some relief in the form of the AAMC's fee-assistance program, which offers income based on household income. (A similar program exists for the MCAT.)

Mike Nguy, an aspiring medical student who works at a community outreach organization in California, used the fee-assistance program to get his fees waived in his first round of medical school applications. Though he didn't end up attending medical school in that application cycle—he hopes to apply again in the coming years—the fee assistance gave him more options.

"I would say that if I didn't have that fee-assistance program, I wouldn't have been courageous to apply late in that cycle," he said. "So I am grateful for having those resources from the student's vantage point.

"The other thing to consider is that while the fee-assistance program does help with these schools, when it comes to applications the cost of travel for interviews and [test] preparation is not covered."

In-person interviews another cost to track

A select few applicants are invited for interviews—one faculty member with a hand in admissions estimates the number at roughly 10 percent. So, you're unlikely to get an interview at every program, but if you get a few, you very well may have to travel.

Airfare alone can exceed \$500 per interview. Some cost-saving measures for those traveling for interviews include using airline points, staying with friends, relatives or members of your college's alumni network and doing multiple interviews in the same location when possible.