

What is Board Certification?

Board certification is a process by which doctors are regularly tested in their knowledge of diseases and skill in clinical care. It is a process chosen by doctors, and unlike the required license to practice medicine, certification is a voluntary, lifelong commitment.

So, if your doctor is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine, what does that mean? The ABFM has certified your family doctor because he or she has demonstrated specific knowledge in the practice of family medicine and has met additional requirements. These requirements begin with graduation from college and four years of medical school, followed by three years of challenging training covering health problems and preventive care of babies, children, teenagers, adults, and seniors. Your doctor also has proven that he or she has a valid medical license to practice medicine in the U.S. or Canada.

After meeting these requirements, your doctor took and passed the ABFM Certification Exam, a rigorous, day-long test that covers all aspects of family medicine. For these achievements, your doctor was awarded an ABFM certificate and the title of Diplomate of the American Board of Family Medicine. This certificate may be hanging in your doctor's office. Take a look if you wish.

But it doesn't end there. Since it was founded, ABFM has issued certificates that are valid for only seven years. To earn a new certificate, your doctor must take and pass a test every seven years, and must participate in ongoing educational activities between exams. Doing this provides evidence to you that your doctor has kept up with the latest medical knowledge.

To learn more about certification and recertification, you can visit www.theabfm.org, and/or ask your doctor about his or her professional experiences.

How Can You Find Out if Your Doctor is Board Certified?

There are over 180 medical specialty boards that are neither members of, nor recognized by, the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). To learn more about the ABFM and other ABMS member boards, you can visit www.abms.org. To find out if your doctor is certified by an ABMS board, such as ABFM, you can call their toll free verification service at 1-866-ASK-ABMS.

ABMS Member Boards

American Board of Allergy & Immunology
American Board of Anesthesiology
American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery
American Board of Dermatology
American Board of Emergency Medicine
American Board of Family Medicine
American Board of Internal Medicine
American Board of Medical Genetics
American Board of Neurological Surgery
American Board of Nuclear Medicine
American Board of Obstetrics & Gynecology
American Board of Ophthalmology
American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
American Board of Otolaryngology
American Board of Pathology
American Board of Pediatrics
American Board of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
American Board of Plastic Surgery
American Board of Preventive Medicine
American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology
American Board of Radiology
American Board of Surgery
American Board of Thoracic Surgery
American Board of Urology



WHAT'S SO SPECIAL
ABOUT YOUR
FAMILY PHYSICIAN?

Your Doctor is Certified by the American Board of Family Medicine

Your family doctor is certified by the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM). This means that he or she has demonstrated knowledge in many different health areas, and specializes in the constantly changing medical needs of you and your family. This also means that your doctor is held to high standards of medical excellence and is keeping up with the latest advances in healthcare.

A Family Physician is concerned with the total health care of the individual and the family and is trained to diagnose and treat a wide variety of ailments in patients of all ages. The Family Physician receives a broad range of training that includes Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Psychiatry and Geriatrics. Special emphasis is placed on prevention on the primary care of entire families utilizing consultations and community resources when appropriate.

To learn more about the ABFM, please visit our website at

www.theabfm.org

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What Did My Doctor Do to Become Board Certified by the ABFM?

To be board certified by the ABFM, your doctor:

- Graduated from college and medical school
- Completed three years of additional training in family medicine covering health problems and health care of babies, children, teenagers, adults, and seniors (a requirement since 1978)
- Maintained a full and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the U.S. or Canada
- Took and passed the ABFM Certification Examination every seven years
- Completed 300 hours of continuing medical education every seven years
- Completed other rigorous educational activities during each seven-year period between examinations

Through its certification processes, ABFM seeks to provide patients such as yourself with evidence that your certified family doctor has completed the necessary training and met the ABFM's requirements for continuing medical education, professional standing, and ongoing evaluation.

What is the American Board of Family Medicine?

The American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) is the second largest medical specialty board in the U.S. ABFM was founded in 1969, and is a voluntary, not-for-profit, private organization that seeks to:

- Improve the quality of medical care
- Establish and maintain standards of excellence in family doctors
- Improve the standards of medical education and training in family practice
- Evaluate family doctors that apply for and hold certificates in family medicine

The ABFM was the first medical specialty board to require recertification, or continual testing of its certified doctors, and has required a significant commitment from its Diplomates in the area of continuing medical education from the beginning.

The ABFM is one of the twenty-four certifying boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and is the only member board that certifies family doctors.

So, what is the ABMS? ABMS is made up of the twenty-four recognized medical specialty boards in this country, and certifies most of the doctors in the U.S. Doctors who obtain certification with ABMS boards must meet high standards in education and clinical practice, must take and pass ongoing tests of their medical knowledge, and must be fully licensed to practice medicine in their local areas.