

BECOMING A PHYSICIAN IN ISRAEL

Israeli Medical Association
The Scientific Council

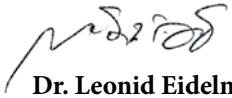
Dear Physician,

Whether you are planning your *aliyah* or return to Israel, or you are already here with us in Israel, the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) welcomes your entrance into the medical community in Israel and the strengthening of the Israeli health system.

Your aliya to Israel involves many difficulties, questions and uncertainties which make the process more difficult. In order to aid you in various aspects of your first contact with the Israeli health system and ease the orientation process, IMA has created a hotline for new immigrant physicians in various languages and is happy to provide you with this orientation booklet.

We wish you a quick and successful absorption process.

Sincerely,



Dr. Leonid Eidelman
President of the Israeli Medical Association



Professor Shai Ashkenazi
Chairperson of the Scientific Council
Israeli Medical Association

Applying for a License to Practice Medicine in Israel

The body authorized by law to grant licenses to practice medicine in Israel is the Ministry of Health. Details on how to submit a license application can be found on the Ministry of Health's Website. An application for licensing must be sent to the medical licensing department of the Ministry of Health, by registered mail.

Immigrant physicians and returning residents who do not have an Israeli medical license are required to pass the licensing examination or internship examination. After receiving your license application and going over the documents that you have submitted, the Ministry of Health determines which examination you must take. The examination can be taken in a number of languages: Hebrew, English, Arabic, Russian, and Spanish.

Physicians who meet the criteria set by law are exempt from the exam. The criteria for exemption from the licensing exam are listed on the Ministry of Health's website.

Any questions regarding the licensing examinations should be submitted to the licensing examinations committee:

test@ima.org.il, tel: 03-6100419

Important

Physicians who graduated and are certified as specialists abroad and submit an application to the Ministry of Health may simultaneously apply to the IMA's Scientific Council for recognition of their specialty (additional details on this application can be found below in this booklet).

In accordance with the Physicians' Regulations (Conditions for Granting an Exemption from the Examination Obligation) 5748-1988, the decision of the Scientific Council may influence whether or not the applicant is granted an exemption from the licensing exam in the following situations:

2a. "A physician from abroad for which the conditions noted below are applicable is exempt from the examination requirement:

1. The Scientific Council recognizes his/her specialist degree, in accordance with the specialist degree regulations, without examination;
2. The applicant obtained a specialist degree abroad from an institution recognized by the Director of the Ministry of Health, on the condition that s/he must take only the Phase 2 Specialist Exam in order to receive a specialist certificate, in accordance with the specialist degree regulations, and only if s/he has practiced medicine for at least 5 consecutive years."

Accordingly, if you are certified as a specialist in another country and if the Ministry of Health has determined that you need to take the licensing examination, please contact the Scientific Council before you take the examination. It is important to know that the Ministry of Health does not grant exemptions from the licensing examination to physicians who have taken it in the past and have not passed.

Physicians from Abroad who have Practiced for 14 Years or More

A physician who graduated abroad and has practiced clinical medicine abroad for 14 years or more is exempt from the written licensing examination, on the condition that s/he successfully completes the 6 month observation period at a department in an accredited institution and later passes the evaluation of the Clinical Aptitude Evaluation Committee. For additional information, click here:

www.health.gov.il/Professions

The Scientific Council may also require that specialists undergo an observation period (adaptation period – see page 8 of this booklet).
If you have practiced medicine abroad in a specific field other than primary care, you may request that the Ministry of Health allow you to begin the observation period in your specific field for 3 months, and afterwards complete your observation period in primary care.

In this case, it is important to coordinate your observation period with the Scientific Council, so that the 3 months in your specialty can be used to provide recommendations both to the Ministry of Health and to the Scientific Council (absolving you from having to go through the same period twice).

For questions on this issue, please contact the service representatives for *Oliym* physicians:

For contact details press here.

Please Note

When you open your file at the Ministry of Health, you will be required to provide documentation including a medical school diploma, your license from the country in which you practiced, etc. Some of these documents are also required by the Scientific Council. In order to prevent unnecessary expenses, be sure to keep two additional copies (regular photocopies of the document, its translation, and the notarization of the translation). Keep one copy with you at all times, and attach one copy to the documents that you submit to the Scientific Council.

The Ministry of Health requires translation of requested documents to Hebrew by a qualified interpreter and notarization by an authorized Israeli notary.

We recommend that you take good care of your original certificates and do not submit them to any organization. You should submit copies that have been verified as identical to the original, but not the original itself, to the Ministry of Health and any other body.

Applying for Recognition of Specialist Certification from Abroad

The Scientific Council of the Israeli Medical Association is legally responsible for the physician specialization system in Israel, and determines specialization tracks, recognized institutions for specialization, syllabuses and more, with the assistance of the scientific associations for each profession.

The Scientific Council of the Israeli Medical Association is also the body that reviews physicians' requests for recognition of specialization and specialty certification obtained abroad. The Scientific Council provides recommendations to the Ministry of Health regarding physicians who merit the title of specialist in Israel. The Ministry of Health issues specialist certification to physicians.

A specialist certified in another country who would like to apply to the Scientific Council for recognition of his/her specialty, must apply in writing to the Scientific Council and send all of the listed documents.

- The physician must indicate clearly the specialties for which s/he is requesting recognition.
- After receiving the original request, a service representative of the Scientific Council will contact the physician by e-mail or phone in order to clarify information and complete all required documentation.
- Two committees of the Scientific Council will discuss the request and come to a decision reflecting the requirements of the Council for examinations, minimum work periods in Israel and required courses.
- **The process may take several months, so it is recommended to apply early.**
- **A physician who has not yet made *Aliyah* to Israel may request assessment of documentation before his/her arrival in Israel.**

- The physician will receive a formal response in writing from the Scientific Council, sent to the e-mail address written on the application.

For any questions, please contact the service representatives for *Oliym* physicians:

For contact details press here.

Address for sending documents:
The Scientific Council, Israeli Medical Association
2 Twin Towers, 35 Jabotinsky St
PO Box 3566
Ramat Gan 52136

Important notice: When sending documents by a delivery person or registered mail directly to our offices (optional), please do not write POB number.

Documents required for application for recognition of specialist certification from abroad

1. Letter to the Scientific Council detailing the request – please clearly state in the letter the specialty or specialties for which you are requesting recognition.
2. Detailed CV – please include your e-mail address, home address and current phone number.
3. M.D. Diploma – medical school graduation diploma.
4. Israeli license, if applicable.
5. Official document detailing the internship period (if performed)
6. Official document from the organization responsible for specialization in the country or from the institution where you were a resident, detailing the residency program that the physician went through.
7. Full residency syllabus, relevant to your residency, if applicable.
8. Confirmation of successful completion of residency exams, if applicable.
9. Specialist certification from an official body authorized to grant such certification in that country.
10. Official documents from the workplaces after completing his residency, detailing your work experience as a specialist.
11. Specialists in the surgical disciplines must present a list of surgeries performed throughout the residency, signed by the physician responsible for the residency.

12. Specialists in the following areas: Family Medicine, Psychiatry, Pediatrics, or Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, must fill out a table detailing their residency and experience as compared to the required track in Israel.

13. A physician who worked in Israel for a given period in an accredited for residency department, may present a letter of recommendation from the director of the department where s/he worked.

Approval of specialty certification and exemption from residency exams for immigrant physicians

An immigrant physician's application to the Scientific Council to recognize a specialty certification and/or for an exemption from residency exams is examined according to guidelines determined by the Council. The guidelines were updated in 2012.

A summary of the guidelines is listed here for your information. For the entire list of guidelines, click here. In all instances of discrepancy between the summary appearing here and the guidelines, the full text shall be considered definitive.

1. Recognition of specialist certification obtained abroad

In accordance with the Physicians' Regulations, the Ministry of Health can approve specialist certification from another country based on a recommendation from the Scientific Council in accordance with the conditions set by the Council. According to the regulations, the Scientific Council may give a recommendation to recognize residency work that was done wholly or partly outside of Israel, as equivalent to a residency or part thereof, with or without conditions, including a requirement to take examinations.

2. Criteria for exemption from the residency exams for physicians from abroad – in effect from 1.1.2012

A. Criteria for exemption from phase 1 examinations – A physician who completed his/her residency abroad and met all the conditions specified below, is exempt from phase 1 examinations.

A1. The residency took place in a department or institution that has accreditation from a national body authorized to provide accreditation.

A2. The residency was full time and continuous, in accordance with the regulations and requirements for clinical activities similar to those specified in the regulations for residency in Israel.

A3. The residency had a defined syllabus that included practice not fundamentally different from that required by the equivalent syllabus for the same discipline in Israel.

A4. The residency period in the base specialty is not shorter than the period required in Israel prior to phase 1 examination (i.e. half of the residency period).

A5. The physician passed an examination during the residency at a national level, similar in level and quality to the phase 1 examination in Israel, and recognized by the official body granting specialist certification in that country.

B. Criteria for exemption from phase 2 examinations – a physician who completed his/her residency abroad and met all the conditions below, will be exempt from phase 2 examinations:

B1. The residency took place in a department or institution that is accredited by an authorized national body to train residents.

B2. The residency was full time and continuous, in accordance with procedures and requirements that are similar to the regulations for residency in Israel.

B3. The residency had a defined syllabus that included practice not fundamentally different from that required by the equivalent syllabus for the same discipline in Israel.

B4. The residency was under the supervision of a central body. The residency period for the main field and the residency period as a whole was no less than 70% of the accepted residency track in Israel.

Note: Obtaining an exemption from phase 2 residency exams does not exempt the physician from the need to complete any period of residency. This period, if required, will be determined by the residency track and residency length in Israel.

B5. The physician requesting an exemption holds a specialist certificate from an official body (college, board, etc.) authorized to issue specialist certificates in that country.

B6. The physician requesting an exemption successfully passed the residency exam (during his/her residency) on a national level similar in level and quality to the phase 2 residency exam in Israel.

C. A physician who was a resident in a country in which there is no national exam at the end of the residency (similar to the phase 2 residency exam in Israel) will be exempt from the phase 2 residency exam in Israel only with the authorization of the exemption committee, and only after completing an adaptation period and receiving the authorization of the accredited for residency department director.

3. Exemption from completing a specialist certificate for candidates for a subspecialty

New immigrant physicians who practiced abroad in one of the subspecialties for over 7 years are required to complete a work period determined by the relevant specialty committee after a review of their training. At the end of the period, they will be required to present a professional evaluation from the director of the subspecialty department, who is also a specialist in the basic specialty, in which the director evaluates the previous overseas experience of the *oleh* physician in the specialty (internal medicine, pediatrics, and surgery). If the opinion is positive, the physician may not be required to complete the basic specialty.

Please note that in such a case, the physician will only be certified as a specialist in the subspecialty. For a list of subspecialties in Israel, click here.

4. Recognition of residency periods

4.1 A physician who was a resident abroad but completed a shorter residency period than that required in Israel in the same specialty, will be required to complete an additional residency period in an accredited department, as required by the residency track in Israel in the same specialty. This can be in the main field or in the secondary field, depending on the specific situation and the committee's recommendation.

4.2 The specialty committee may recognize work periods that the physician completed as a specialist as meeting the requirements for an additional residency period, if the residency was shorter than that in Israel.

4.3 Completion of a residency for physicians that performed residency abroad – a physician may complete the additional period at a completely or partially recognized department. If the physician chooses a partially-accredited department, s/he shall complete the remaining period in another department that is fully accredited.

For example: A physician who requires two more years to complete his/her residency and chose to continue it in a department that is partly accredited for 6 month less than full accreditation, can spend one and a half years in that department and then the final half year at a different department that is fully accredited. Any physicians wishing to continue their residency at a partially-accredited department are recommended to consult with the Scientific Council prior to beginning work.

4.4 Recognition of direct internship period – in countries in which there is a direct internship, the internship year will be counted for the residency years for physicians who graduated in those countries and completed a direct internship.

4.5 Exemption from the basic sciences – an oleh physician for whom the Scientific Council has recognized a year or more of his/her residency abroad is not required to complete the basic sciences as part of completing his/her residency.

4.6 A physician who performed his/her residency abroad and is required to complete the residency in Israel, even for a short time, shall be deemed, for all intents and purposes, to be a resident. His/her residency period begins on the day s/he began the supplementary residency or the remainder period at an accredited institution. S/he must contact the Scientific Council in order to open a residency file immediately upon beginning the residency. See below in this chapter on beginning a residency in Israel.

5. Adaptation Period (previously called "observation period")

5.1 Goal of the Adaptation Period: The goal of this period is to verify that the new immigrant specialist is able to work as a physician in Israel, has a sufficient level of training, knowledge, clinical approach, and interpersonal skills, is familiar with the Israeli medical system and is able to work within it.

5.2 Duration: The standard adaptation period is 3 months and shall be undertaken consecutively and on a full-time basis.

5.3 In deciding about a physician's request for recognition of a specialty and sub-specialty (which is recognized in Israel as sub-specialty of that specialty), the specialty committee may decide on a single adjustment period with a department director who is a specialist in both the specialty and sub-specialty, and who will provide a recommendation on granting a specialty certificate to the applicant physician for both fields.

5.4 A physician who has received a recommendation for recognizing his/her specialty after successfully completing the phase 2 exam is not required to undergo an adaptation period.

5.5 Location of the adaptation period: The appropriate framework for an adaptation period (i.e., a department, clinic, institute, etc.), will be determined by the specialty committee. The adaptation period can be performed in any institution accredited in Israel for residency for at least two-thirds of the residency period, for that specialty.

5.6 Activity and Content: For the duration of the adaptation period, the physician must be exposed to all the ongoing work of the department, while carrying out all necessary activity in his/her specialty.

5.7 Recommendation Letter: At the end of the adaptation period, the director of the department in which the physician worked will send a recommendation letter to the Scientific Council, including the dates of the beginning and end of the adaptation period. In addition, the director will detail the physician's actual clinical work, his/her evaluation and recommendation.

5.8 If the opinion of the director of the department in which the adaptation period was carried out is not positive, the director will be asked to estimate the residency period that the applicant physician must complete. The committee, based on this recommendation, will determine its requirements of the applicant physician in order to complete the specialty or sub-specialty and receive certification.

6. Application to recognize the specialty of a physician who completed residency abroad.

6.1 The date of specialty certification in Israel will be the latter of two dates: the date of the submission of the application or the date of completion of the Scientific Council's requirements.

6.2 If the residency and exams performed abroad by an oleh physician were fully recognized, the physician's professional seniority as a specialist will begin from the date on which the physician was certified as a specialist abroad. In this case, alongside the certification date in Israel, the date the specialty certificate was received abroad will be noted.

Beginning a Residency in Israel

If you are interested in beginning a residency in Israel, you must personally contact the medical institution to which you would like to be accepted. Please verify that the department / clinic / institution is accredited for residency in Israel. To conduct a search of accredited institutions for residency in Israel, click here:

If you have questions, please contact the service representatives for new immigrant physicians:

For contact details press here.

Upon being accepted to a residency, you must submit the following to the Scientific Council:

- Application to open a residency file – the payment will be carried out with your personal card, on our web site: www.ima.org.il/internes.
- Two Passport size photos.
- A copy of your license to practice medicine in Israel.
- A copy of your original diploma and notarized translation.
- Original certificate of acceptance to full-time residency from the institution, printed the institution's letterhead and noting the exact date of the beginning of the residency, including signatures and stamps of the following: department director, residency committee chairman, and institution director.

The documents, which can be printed from the website or obtained from the residency committee chairman at the institution, must arrive at the Scientific Council within 60 days of the beginning of the residency. You can print the documents by clicking here. If the documents arrive at the Scientific Council within 60 days of beginning the residency, then the starting date of the residency will be determined according to its actual starting date. If the documents arrive later, the starting date of the residency will be determined according to the date of the documents arrival at the Scientific Council.

Important Note: Any physician working full-time as a resident in a medical accredited recognized by the Scientific Council may submit a request to open a residency file, whether s/he is funded by an absorption foundation, the Shapira Foundation, the institution itself, or any other source of funding.

If you have any questions, please contact the Scientific Council's service staff: **service@ima.org.il**

For more contact details please press here.

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