

Anesthesiologist

The doctor who puts you to sleep for surgery and keeps you alive through it. Five years of residency, high pay, no clinic to run.

TYPICAL PAY

\$420,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$300k to \$550k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

11 to 13 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Operating rooms, labour and delivery, intensive care, pain clinics

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Top marks in biology, chemistry, math and English. Physics matters more here than in most specialties.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
Any major works. Keep a GPA (grade point average) above 3.8, volunteer, do research. Write the MCAT (medical school admission test).
- 3 Medical school, the MD (doctor of medicine)** 3 to 4 years
Acceptance rates are 5% to 15%. Classes, then clinical rotations. Most students meet anesthesia during their surgery block.
- 4 Anesthesiology residency** 5 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Operating rooms, obstetrics, the ICU (intensive care unit), pain clinic and pediatric anesthesia.
- 5 Certification and licence** End of residency
Pass the Royal College exam to become FRCPC (Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Canada), then register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest paid non-surgical specialties
- + No clinic, no overhead, no paperwork piling up
- + Every case has a clear start and finish
- Hours of calm, then seconds where a mistake can kill
- Overnight and weekend call for your whole career
- Patients rarely remember you

Good to know

You are with the patient longer than the surgeon

The anesthesiologist is there before the first cut and after the last stitch. During a long operation, the surgeon may change but the anesthesiologist stays until the patient wakes up.

Doctors only, in Canada

In the US, nurse anesthetists give a large share of anesthetics. Canada never adopted that model. Every anesthetic here is run by a physician, which is one reason the specialty pays so well.

Optional boosts

Critical care medicine. Pain medicine. Cardiac anesthesia. Pediatric or obstetric anesthesia.

Where these numbers come from

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

CIHI: A profile of physicians in Canada, 2024 (payments)

CIHI: National Physician Database, payments by specialty, 2023 to 2024 (data tables)

CaRMS: the residency match

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/anesthesiologist>



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