

General Surgeon

Operate on the abdomen, breast, skin and trauma cases. About 13 years of training for one of the broadest jobs in medicine.

TYPICAL PAY

\$420,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$300k to \$550k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospital operating rooms, wards, clinics, trauma centres

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Top marks in biology, chemistry, math and English. You need a very high average to get into a pre-med undergrad.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
Any major works, most take life sciences. Keep a GPA above 3.8, do research and volunteer. 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%. Two years of classes, then clinical rotations. Do surgery electives in your final year to earn reference letters.
- 4 General surgery residency** 5 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Paid, supervised. In-hospital call from year one. You operate more every year.
- 5 Royal College exam, licence, often a fellowship** 1 to 2 years
Pass the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada exam to become FRCSC (Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada). Register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons. Many add a 1 to 2 year fellowship.

Pros and cons

- + One of the highest paid jobs in Canada
- + You fix problems with your hands and see the result the same day
- + Near-total job security once you are in
- About 13 years of training, most of it underpaid
- Call nights for your whole career, not just residency
- The match is competitive and you may not get the specialty you want

Optional boosts

Colorectal surgery. Surgical oncology. Trauma and acute care. Minimally invasive and bariatric.

Good to know

24 hours on call is normal

In most provinces a resident can be on call in the hospital for 24 hours straight, then go home the next morning. Quebec capped in-hospital call at 16 hours after a 2011 arbitration ruling, and it remains the exce...

The Royal College exam is the last gate

The specialty exam that makes you a surgeon has a written part and an applied part, and you sit it in your final year of residency. The Royal College runs spring and fall sessions. Fail, and you wait months for th...

Where these numbers come from

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
CIHI: Physicians in Canada
CaRMS: the residency match
Job Bank: Surgeons, wages (updated Nov 2025)

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/general-surgeon>



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