

Neurosurgeon

Operate on the brain, spine and nerves. The longest surgical training in Canada, one of the highest paid, and one of the smallest job markets.

TYPICAL PAY

\$540,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$380k to \$750k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

13 to 16 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Large teaching hospitals, trauma centres, operating rooms, intensi...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Top marks in biology, chemistry, math and English. A very high average is the entry ticket.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
Any major, usually life sciences or neuroscience. High GPA, research, volunteering. 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%. Neurosurgery electives and published research in your final year are close to mandatory for the match.
- 4 Neurosurgery residency** 6 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Paid, supervised. Many programs add 1 to 2 research years, and some residents finish a PhD (research doctorate) along the way.
- 5 Royal College exam, licence, fellowship** 1 to 2 years
Pass the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada exam, register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons. Almost everyone does a 1 to 2 year fellowship, often in the US.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest paid jobs in Canada
- + You operate on the organ that makes a person who they are
- + Deep, technical work under a microscope
- Up to 16 years of training, the longest on this site
- Very few residency spots and very few jobs
- Brutal hours and call, and outcomes that can be devastating

Good to know

Brain surgery was mapped in Montreal

In the 1930s, Wilder Penfield at the Montreal Neurological Institute operated on awake epilepsy patients and touched parts of the brain with a tiny electrode to see what moved or what they felt. His maps...

The brain itself feels no pain

The scalp and skull need freezing, but the brain has no pain receptors. That is why some tumour operations are done with the patient awake and talking, so the surgeon can avoid the parts that control speech.

Optional boosts

Spine. Vascular and endovascular. Tumour and skull base. Pediatric.

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/neurosurgeon>



Scan for the full clicker