

Orthopedic Surgeon

Fix bones and joints: fractures, hip and knee replacements, torn ligaments. Very well paid, but new grads can struggle to find a hospital job.

TYPICAL PAY

\$450,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$350k to \$650k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospital operating rooms, fracture clinics, sports clinics, trauma cent...

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. 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%. Orthopedic electives and research in your final year matter a lot for the match.
- 4 Orthopedic surgery residency** 5 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Paid, supervised. Trauma call, fracture clinics, joint replacements, kids, spine, sports.
- 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 at least one fellowship.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest paid specialties in Canada
- + Results you can see: a patient walks again
- + Mechanical, hands-on work with tools and implants
- Permanent hospital jobs are scarce for new grads
- One of the most competitive matches
- Trauma call and long operations, for decades

Good to know

The tools look like they came from a hardware store

Orthopedic operating rooms use power saws, drills, mallets, chisels and reamers. Implants are held in with screws and plates. It is carpentry on living bone.

Waiting a year for a new knee

The national target is a hip or knee replacement within 6 months. Many provinces miss it, and waits over a year are common in places. The bottleneck is funded operating time, not a lack of trained surgeon...

Optional boosts

Joint replacement (arthroplasty). Sports surgery. Spine. Trauma.

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/orthopedic-surgeon>



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