

Physician Assistant

A medically trained professional who works under a doctor: takes histories, examines, orders tests, prescribes and assists in surgery. A 2-year program after university, and one of the newest regulated jobs in Canada.

TYPICAL PAY

\$97,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$50k to \$125k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, emergency departments, family practices, su...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Strong marks in biology, chemistry and math. Get some health care exposure: volunteering, first aid, a hospital job.
- 2 University** 2 to 4 years
At least 2 years of a bachelor's degree with anatomy, physiology and biochemistry. Most programs prefer a finished degree and real health care experience.
- 3 PA (physician assistant) program** About 2 years
Master's or bachelor's level, about 2 years: a year of classes, then a year of clinical rotations through medicine, surgery, emergency, pediatrics, psychiatry and family practice. Programs at McMaster, the University of Toronto, the University of Manitoba (25 months) and t...
- 4 Certification exam** After graduation
Pass the PACE (the national PA certification exam), run by PACCC (the Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada), to use the CCPA (Canadian Certified Physician Assistant) title.
- 5 Register where required** A few months
Several provinces, including Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick, register PAs through their College of Physicians and Surgeons. Then find a supervising physician and a job.

Pros and cons

- + Two years of training instead of ten to do real medicine
- + Six figures within a few years
- + Variety: switch from emergency to surgery to family practice without retraining
- Always supervised; you never practise on your own
- Not every province regulates or funds the role yet
- The job is new, so patients and even staff may not know what you are

Optional boosts

Emergency department. Surgery. Family practice. Orthopedics and fracture clinics.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Physician assistants, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Canadian Association of Physician Assistants

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (regulates Ontario PAs)

University of Manitoba: Master of Physician Assistant Studies

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/physician-assistant>

Good to know

Born in the military

The Canadian Armed Forces have used physician assistants for decades, on ships, bases and deployments, long before the first civilian university programs opened. Many early civilian PAs (physicia...

Alberta only started regulating PAs (physician assistants) i...

Alberta's job profile notes that physician assistants came under the province's Health Professions Act in 2023, making registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta mandatory. The rules f...



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