

Respirologist

The lung doctor. Asthma, smokers' lungs, sleep apnea and the intensive care unit, five years of residency after medical school.

TYPICAL PAY

\$380,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$280k to \$520k

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

Hospitals, intensive care units, lung clinics, sleep labs

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 for a science undergrad.
- 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.
- 4 Internal medicine residency** 3 years
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Hospital wards, the ICU (intensive care unit) and clinics. In year 3 you apply to the subspecialty match.
- 5 Respirology residency, then certification** 2 years
Lung clinics, bronchoscopy, breathing tests, sleep medicine and months in intensive care. Pass the Royal College exams to become FRCPC (Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Canada) and register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Pros and cons

- + Well paid, especially with intensive care work
- + A mix of clinic, procedures and critical care, so it never gets dull
- + Lung disease is common everywhere, so jobs are everywhere
- Thirteen years of training
- Intensive care weeks are brutal: nights, deaths and family meetings
- Many patients have smoking-related disease that will not improve

Optional boosts

Critical care medicine. Sleep medicine. Interventional pulmonology. Lung transplant.

Good to know

Millions of Canadian lungs

More than 3 million Canadians have asthma, and about 2 million adults over 35 live with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. Chronic lung disea...

The ventilator doctor

In many Canadian hospitals, the doctor running the intensive care unit is a respirologist. Ventilators are lung machines, and respirologists spend months of residency learning to run them. That is why they we...

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Respirologist, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
CIHI: A profile of physicians in Canada, 2024 (payments)
Canadian Thoracic Society

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/respirologist>



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