

Anesthesiologist

You keep people alive and unaware while someone else operates. Twelve years of training, and among the highest pay in medicine.

TYPICAL PAY

\$391,490

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$101k to \$557k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 13 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospital operating rooms, surgery centers, intensive care units, pain...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry, physics and math, with the grades to get into a competitive college program.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major, but you must complete the pre-medical science courses and take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).
- 3 Medical school** 4 years
Classroom science then hospital rotations. You graduate as a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO).
- 4 Intern year** 1 year
A general clinical year, usually in medicine or surgery, before anesthesia training proper.
- 5 Anesthesiology residency** 3 years
Operating rooms, intensive care, obstetrics and pain. Paid, supervised, with increasing independence.
- 6 Board certification** During and after residency
Three exams from the American Board of Anesthesiology, taken in order across residency and after it.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest-paid physicians in the country
- + The work ends when the cases end, with no clinic inbox
- + Immediate, visible results from what you do
- Twelve years and around \$200,000 of debt first
- Nights, weekends and holidays are built into the job
- Long stretches of routine punctuated by sudden crises

Good to know

The board is older than most hospitals you know

The American Board of Anesthesiology has been setting standards for the specialty since 1938, back when anesthesia was often given by whoever was free in the room.

The last exam uses actors

The final certifying exam includes stations where trained actors play patients and examiners watch how you handle them. Knowing the medicine is not enough. You have to show it under observation.

Optional boosts

Pain medicine. Critical care medicine. Cardiac anesthesiology. Pediatric anesthesiology.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Anesthesiologists (29-1211.00)
The American Board of Anesthesiology
American Society of Anesthesiologists
Association of American Medical Colleges

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/anesthesiologist>



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