

Family Doctor

Eleven years of training, then a career looking after the same people from birth to old age.

TYPICAL PAY

\$244,180

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$77k to \$429k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

11 to 12 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Clinics, community health centers, hospitals, rural practice

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major, but finish the pre-medicine sciences, keep a very high grade average, and write the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).
- 2 Medical school** 4 years
An MD (doctor of medicine) or a DO (doctor of osteopathic medicine) degree. Classes first, then clinical rotations through every specialty.
- 3 Match into residency** Final year
In your final year you rank family medicine programs, they rank you, and a national computer match decides where you go.
- 4 Family medicine residency** 3 years
36 months in an accredited program, 12 months in each training year, covering clinic, hospital, obstetrics, pediatrics and emergency care.
- 5 License and board certification** During and after residency
A license from your state medical board, then the one-day family medicine certification exam from the American Board of Family Medicine.

Pros and cons

- + The shortest residency in medicine at three years
- + You can practice anywhere, including small towns that will pay to get you
- + The broadest scope of any specialty: newborns to nursing homes
- Eleven years and roughly \$200,000 of debt
- Paid well below procedural specialists for the same training length
- Hours of unpaid paperwork after the clinic closes

Optional boosts

Sports medicine. Obstetrics. Geriatrics. Addiction medicine.

Good to know

It is the broadest specialty in medicine

A family doctor is trained to deliver a baby, treat that child's ear infection, manage their parent's diabetes and care for their grandparent at the end of life. No other specialty covers the whole a...

Three years is the shortest road to independence

Family medicine residency is 36 months. Most other specialties run five to eight years after medical school, so this is the fastest route to being a fully licensed doctor practicing on your own.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Family Medicine Physicians (29-1215.00)

American Board of Family Medicine: initial training requirements

United States Medical Licensing Examination

Association of American Medical Colleges: applying to medical school

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/family-doctor>



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