

Infectious Disease Doctor

The doctor other doctors call when nobody can work out what the infection is. Thirteen years of training for one of medicine's lower paydays.

TYPICAL PAY

\$256,560

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$74k to \$475k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

13 to 14 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, outpatient clinics, public health departments, research labs

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major, as long as you finish the required biology, chemistry, physics and math courses. Grades and the admission test do the deciding.
- 2 Medical school** 4 years
Four years for a Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree. Two years of classroom science, two years rotating through hospital departments.
- 3 Internal medicine residency** 3 years
Three years of paid hospital training in adult medicine, matched through the national residency match. This is the base you specialize from.
- 4 Infectious disease fellowship** 2 years
Usually two more years, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, focused on infections, antibiotics, immunocompromised patients and travel and tropical medicine.
- 5 State license and board certification** Months, ongoing renewal
A medical license from the state you work in, plus board certification in internal medicine and then in infectious disease.

Pros and cons

- + Detective work: you are the one called when the diagnosis is a puzzle
- + Fewer procedures and fewer emergencies than most hospital specialties
- + Skills that matter in outbreaks, public health and global health
- Poorly paid for the training, and everyone in medicine knows it
- Thirteen years minimum before you are fully qualified
- Hospital call, weekends and holidays; infections do not keep office hours

Optional boosts

Transplant and cancer infections. Antibiotic stewardship. Infection prevention and hospital epidemiology. Public health.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: General Internal Medicine Physicians (29-1216.00)

Infectious Diseases Society of America

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education: internal medicine and its subspecialties

United States Medical Licensing Examination

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/infectious-disease-doctor>

Good to know

The fellowship is one of the few that does not fill

Most American medical training programs get more applicants than spots. Infectious disease is an exception: a large share of its fellowship positions go unfilled every year, because the two extra years of training...

You are the antibiotic police

Hospitals run antibiotic stewardship programs because overusing antibiotics breeds resistant bacteria, and federal rules now require those programs. The infectious disease doctor is usually the one who...



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