

Medical Laboratory Scientist

Run the tests that tell doctors what is wrong. Most of a diagnosis starts in your lab, and the patient never meets you.

TYPICAL PAY

\$62,930

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$39k to \$101k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospital labs, reference labs, blood banks, public health labs

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology and chemistry above all. Labs are chemistry with consequences.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Either a medical laboratory science degree, or a biology or chemistry degree plus a separate clinical program afterwards.
- 3 Accredited clinical program** 10 to 12 months
 Rotations through chemistry, hematology, microbiology, immunology and blood banking. Mayo Clinic runs a 10.5 month program at sites in Minnesota, Florida and Arizona.
- 4 National certification exam** Weeks
 Taken once you finish. Employers treat passing it as the real qualification, not the degree on its own.
- 5 First hospital post** Year 1
 You start on one bench, usually chemistry or hematology, and rotate as you prove out.

Pros and cons

- + Four years to a stable hospital career
- + Real science every day, not paperwork about science
- + Chronic staff shortages mean you can find work anywhere
- Pay lags nursing and imaging for a similar length of study
- Nights, weekends and holidays are part of the schedule
- Invisible work: neither patients nor most doctors know your name

Good to know

320,000 labs are federally regulated

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services oversee roughly 320,000 laboratory entities under a 1988 law that sets quality standards based on how complex each test is. Who is allowed to per...

The clinical year can be under a year

Mayo Clinic's medical laboratory science program runs 10.5 months across campuses in Minnesota, Florida and Arizona, and is accredited by the national clinical laboratory accrediting agency. That final stret...

Optional boosts

Blood banking. Microbiology. Molecular diagnostics. Cytotechnology.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists (29-2011.00)

National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science: medical laboratory scientist career

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/medical-laboratory-scientist>



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