

Nephrologist

The kidney doctor. Thirteen years of training, then you keep people alive on dialysis and get them to transplant.

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, dialysis centers, outpatient clinics, transplant prog...

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major, with the pre-medical science prerequisites and a high grade point average. Sit the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).
- 2 Medical school** 4 years
Two years of science, two years of clinical rotations, ending with a Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree. You pass the first two steps of the national licensing exam along the way.
- 3 Internal medicine residency** 3 years
Paid hospital training in adult medicine, accredited by the ACGME (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education). You get your state medical license during this.
- 4 Nephrology fellowship** 2 years
Subspecialty training in kidney disease, dialysis, transplant and blood chemistry. Longer if you add transplant or research training.
- 5 Board certification** Exams
Certify in internal medicine, then in nephrology, through the ABIM (American Board of Internal Medicine), and keep it current afterward.

Pros and cons

- + Deep physiology and genuinely hard problem solving
- + Long relationships with patients you see every month for years
- + You visibly keep people alive, and get some of them to transplant
- Thirteen years and heavy debt before you are independent
- Dialysis rounds start early and spread across several units
- Frequent call, including nights and weekends

Optional boosts

Transplant nephrology. Interventional nephrology. Critical care nephrology. Onconeurology and glomerular disease.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: General Internal Medicine Physicians (29-1216.00)
American Board of Internal Medicine
United States Medical Licensing Examination
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education

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/nephrologist>

Good to know

Kidney failure has its own federal program

The United States covers dialysis and kidney transplant for people of any age through Medicare, a benefit created by Congress in the early 1970s. It is the only disease in the country with its own national entitlement.

Your kidneys filter your whole blood supply many times a...

Blood passes through the kidneys continuously, and the volume processed over 24 hours is far larger than the amount of blood in your body. Nearly all of the fluid filtered is reabsorbed, and only a small fraction is excreted.



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