

Neurologist

The brain and nerve doctor who does not operate. Strokes, seizures, migraines, multiple sclerosis. Twelve years of training and a shortage almost everywhere.

TYPICAL PAY

\$248,560

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$83k to \$451k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 13 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, stroke units, outpatient clinics, university medical centers

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry, physics and math, with grades good enough for a competitive college.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major, as long as you finish the pre-medical science courses and sit the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).
- 3 Medical school** 4 years
Two years of classroom science, then two years of hospital rotations. You graduate a Doctor of Medicine or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medi...
- 4 Intern year** 1 year
A general year, almost always internal medicine, before neurology training starts.
- 5 Neurology residency** 3 years
Stroke, epilepsy, nerve and muscle disease, intensive care, clinic. Paid and supervised, with more independence each year.
- 6 Board certification** After residency
The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology exam. You also need a full license from the state where you work.

Pros and cons

- + A genuine shortage, so you can choose where you live
- + The most intellectually satisfying diagnosis in medicine
- + Mostly clinic hours compared with surgical specialties
- Twelve years and about \$200,000 of debt first
- Many of the diseases have no cure and you deliver that news often
- Stroke call means being woken and being fast

Good to know

The same board covers psychiatry

Neurology and psychiatry share one certifying body, the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. The two fields split off from each other only in the last century, and they still overlap at the edges.

The exam comes before the scanner

Neurologists are trained to work out which part of the nervous system is damaged using nothing but questions, a reflex hammer, a pin and a tuning fork. The scan is often ordered to confirm what the examinatio...

Optional boosts

Vascular neurology. Epilepsy. Neuromuscular medicine. Neurocritical care.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Neurologists (29-1217.00)
American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology: becoming certified
United States Medical Licensing Examination
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/neurologist>



Scan for the full clicker