

Oncologist

The cancer doctor. Thirteen years of training, some of the hardest conversations in medicine, and a field that gets better almost every year.

TYPICAL PAY

\$236,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$66k to \$239k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

13 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Cancer centers, hospital wards, infusion clinics, university research...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 9 to 12
 Biology, chemistry, physics, calculus and English. Grades matter from ninth grade because medical school admissions look at your whole college record and your college depends on this one.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major, as long as you finish the science prerequisites and keep a high GPA. Take the medical college admission test in your third year.
- 3 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 also pass the first two steps of the national licensing examination.
- 4 Internal medicine residency** 3 years
 Paid hospital training, matched through the national residency match. Long hours, and where you decide oncology is what you want.
- 5 Hematology and oncology fellowship** 2 to 3 years
 Accredited by ACGME (the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education). Most programs combine blood disorders and cancer into one fellowship. Board certification follows.

Pros and cons

- + You treat a disease that is genuinely being beaten back, year by year
- + Long relationships with patients and their families
- + High pay and total job security anywhere in the country
- Thirteen to fifteen years of training and very large debt
- Patients die, and some of them are your age
- Endless fights with insurers over drugs you know the patient needs

Optional boosts

One cancer type. Bone marrow transplant. Clinical trials research. Palliative care.

Good to know

Two million diagnoses a year

The National Cancer Institute estimated about 2,041,910 new cancer cases in the United States in 2025, and about 618,120 deaths. Roughly 38.9 percent of people will be diagnosed with cancer at some point i...

Death rates have been falling for thirty years

Overall cancer death rates in the United States have dropped steadily since the early 1990s. Between 2018 and 2022 they fell about 1.7 percent a year in men and 1.3 percent in women. Better screening, fe...

Where these numbers come from

O*NET OnLine: Physicians, All Other (29-1229.00)

United States Medical Licensing Examination

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education

National Cancer Institute: cancer statistics

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/oncologist>



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