

Orthopedic Surgeon

Fix broken bones, worn-out joints and torn ligaments. Thirteen years of training for one of the best paid jobs in medicine.

TYPICAL PAY

\$358,550

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$84k to \$659k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

13 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospital operating rooms, trauma centers, orthopedic group practic...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Top grades across biology, chemistry, physics and math. You need a strong college application first.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major, but you must finish the science prerequisites, keep a very high GPA and sit the medical college admission test.
- 3 Medical school** 4 years
 Two years of science, two years of clinical rotations, leading to an MD (doctor of medicine) or a DO (doctor of osteopathic medicine). Pass the first two national licensing exams along the way.
- 4 Orthopedic surgery residency** 5 years
 Five years, matched through the national residency match. Accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Paid, supervised, and long.
- 5 Fellowship and board certification** 1 to 2 years
 Most surgeons add a one-year fellowship in a subspecialty. Then the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery certification, which is a written exam followed by an oral exam built on a list of your own cases.

Pros and cons

- + Very high pay and strong demand as the population ages
- + Visible, fast results. People walk again
- + Hands-on and mechanical rather than purely diagnostic
- Thirteen years minimum, with large debt for most of it
- The residency match is brutally competitive
- Heavy physical work: standing, pulling, lead aprons, radiation exposure

Good to know

The exam uses your own operations

To finish board certification you submit a list of every case you did over a set period, and the oral exam is built from those cases with peer review of your outcomes. Very few professions test you on your...

Residency programs must be accredited or lose funding

Accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education is voluntary, but programs without it do not receive federal Medicare money for training residents. That is why almost every real...

Optional boosts

Sports medicine. Joint replacement. Trauma. Hand, spine, foot and ankle, pediatrics.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Orthopedic Surgeons, Except Pediatric (29-1242.00)
 American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
 Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
 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/orthopedic-surgeon>



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