

Respirologist

The lung doctor, called a pulmonologist in the United States. Thirteen years of training, and you often run the intensive care unit as well.

TYPICAL PAY

\$236,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$66k to \$239k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

13 to 14 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Hospitals, intensive care units,
outpatient lung clinics, sleep labs**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Top grades in biology, chemistry, physics and math. Medicine is a numbers game long before it is a caring one, and it starts with your college admission.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major, as long as you finish the science prerequisites and keep a high GPA. Sit the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), which about 95,000 people take each year.
- 3 Medical school** 4 years
 Two years of science, two of clinical rotations, ending in an MD (Doctor of Medicine) or a DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine). There are 174 medical schools in the country and admission is brutal.
- 4 Internal medicine residency** 3 years
 Paid, supervised hospital training in adult medicine. You are matched to a program by a national algorithm, not by applying job by job.
- 5 Pulmonary and critical care fellowship** 2 to 3 years
 Lungs, ventilators and intensive care. Two years for pulmonary alone, three for the combined pulmonary and critical care training most people do.

Pros and cons

- + Pay near the top of medicine and near total job security
- + You do procedures as well as thinking, which keeps the work varied
- + Your decisions in the intensive care unit change outcomes within hours
- Thirteen years minimum, and six figures of debt through most of them
- Intensive care work means constant death and difficult family conversations
- Nights, weekends and long calls run right through your twenties

Good to know

The wage survey refuses to name a top figure

For the physician group this job sits in, the federal survey publishes a median but stops counting at \$239,200 a year. Anything above that is reported only as at or above the cap, so any precise top number you...

In most American hospitals the lung doctor runs the intens...

Pulmonary and critical care are trained together here, which is why the specialist who treats your asthma in clinic on Tuesday is managing ventilators in the unit on Thursday. In some other countries those are...

Where these numbers come from

O*NET: Physicians, All Other, the survey line that covers lung doctors
 ABIM, the American Board of Internal Medicine
 ACGME, which accredits residency and fellowship programs
 AAMC, the 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/respirologist>



Scan for the full clicker