K12 ACADEMICS — A FIELD GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Medical & Dental Residency Specialties

30 physician & dental specialties — what each residency involves, training length & what the work is like.

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2026 EDITION

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30 Topics, 2 Sections.

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Physician Residency Specialties

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Anesthesiology

WHAT IT IS

Anesthesiologists keep patients safe, unconscious or comfortable, and stable during surgery and procedures , and manage pain and critical care.

WHAT YOU DO

They plan and deliver anesthesia, monitor vital functions during operations, and manage acute and chronic pain ; some work in intensive care.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency (including a preliminary/intern year), with fellowships available.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include pain medicine, critical care, cardiac anesthesia, pediatric anesthesia, obstetric anesthesia, and regional anesthesia .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 and ~22,100 openings per year. Pay varies widely by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Focus	**Anesthesia & pain**
Setting	**OR & ICU**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**High**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Dermatology

WHAT IT IS

Dermatologists diagnose and treat conditions of the skin, hair, and nails — from acne and eczema to skin cancer — with medical, surgical, and cosmetic care. It's one of the most competitive specialties.

WHAT YOU DO

They evaluate and treat skin disease, perform biopsies and skin-cancer surgery, and provide cosmetic procedures , mostly in outpatient clinics.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency (after a preliminary year), with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include Mohs micrographic surgery, dermatopathology, and pediatric dermatology .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Treats	**Skin, hair, nails**
Setting	**Clinic-focused**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Competitiveness	**Very competitive**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Emergency Medicine

WHAT IT IS

Emergency medicine physicians provide immediate care for acute illness and injury — from heart attacks and trauma to infections and emergencies of every kind — in the ED.

WHAT YOU DO

They rapidly assess, stabilize, and treat undifferentiated patients , perform procedures, and coordinate admissions or transfers, working in shifts.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3- or 4-year residency , with fellowships available.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include pediatric emergency medicine, medical toxicology, EMS/prehospital care, sports medicine, ultrasound, and critical care .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**3–4 years**
Focus	**Acute & emergency care**
Setting	**Emergency department**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pace	**Fast, high-acuity**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Family Medicine

WHAT IT IS

Family medicine physicians provide comprehensive primary care for patients of all ages — children, adults, and seniors — emphasizing continuity, prevention, and the whole person and family.

WHAT YOU DO

Family physicians handle preventive care, chronic disease, minor procedures, and acute visits across the lifespan, often serving as a community's first point of contact.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3-year residency covering pediatrics, internal medicine, OB, and more. Optional fellowships add focused skills.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include sports medicine, geriatrics, hospice & palliative care, obstetrics, and adolescent medicine .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**3 years**
Treats	**All ages**
Setting	**Outpatient-focused**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Focus	**Continuity primary care**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

General Surgery

WHAT IT IS

General surgeons diagnose and operate on a broad range of conditions — especially of the abdomen, digestive tract, skin, and soft tissue — and manage surgical patients before and after operations.

WHAT YOU DO

General surgeons perform operations, run trauma and acute-care surgery, and manage perioperative care ; the field is the foundation for many surgical subspecialties.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5-year residency , followed by optional 1–2 year fellowships to subspecialize.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include vascular surgery, colorectal surgery, surgical oncology, trauma & critical care, pediatric surgery, minimally invasive/bariatric surgery, and transplant .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**5 years**
Focus	**Operative care**
Setting	**OR & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Gateway to	**Surgical fellowships**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Internal Medicine

WHAT IT IS

Internal medicine physicians (internists) are experts in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of adult disease . They care for the whole adult patient — often complex, multi-system illness — as primary-care doctors, hospitalists, or the foundation for many subspecialties.

WHAT YOU DO

Internists manage chronic conditions, acute illness, and preventive care for adults in clinics and hospitals. Hospitalists focus on inpatient care; outpatient internists provide continuity primary care.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3-year residency after medical school. It's the gateway to a wide range of fellowships (1–3 years) that define subspecialties.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Internal medicine leads to many fellowships, including: cardiology, gastroenterology, pulmonary & critical care, nephrology, endocrinology, infectious disease, rheumatology, hematology & oncology, and geriatrics .

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**3 years**
Treats	**Adults**
Setting	**Clinic & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Gateway to	**Many fellowships**

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Medical Genetics

WHAT IT IS

Medical geneticists diagnose and manage inherited and genetic conditions — using genomic testing to guide diagnosis, treatment, and family counseling — a fast-growing field as genomic medicine expands.

WHAT YOU DO

They evaluate genetic disorders, interpret genomic tests, and counsel patients and families , often alongside genetic counselors.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

2-year residency (or combined tracks with pediatrics, internal medicine, etc.), plus subspecialty options.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Subspecialties/fellowships include clinical biochemical genetics, molecular genetic pathology, and laboratory genetics .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**2–4 years**
Focus	**Genetic disease**
Setting	**Clinic & lab**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Growing	**Genomic medicine**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Neurological Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Neurosurgeons perform surgery on the brain, spinal cord, and nervous system — treating tumors, trauma, aneurysms, spine disorders, and more. It's one of the longest and most demanding trainings in medicine.

WHAT YOU DO

They operate on the brain and spine, manage neurotrauma, and treat complex nervous-system conditions , often in high-stakes settings.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

7-year residency — one of the longest — with optional fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include spine, cerebrovascular/endovascular, neuro-oncology, functional/epilepsy, and pediatric neurosurgery .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 . Pay varies by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more. Neurosurgeons are among the...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**7 years**
Treats	**Brain, spine, nerves**
Setting	**OR & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**Among the highest**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Neurology

WHAT IT IS

Neurologists diagnose and treat disorders of the brain, spinal cord, nerves, and muscles — stroke, epilepsy, Parkinson's, MS, migraine, and more — medically (not surgically).

WHAT YOU DO

They evaluate neurological symptoms, interpret tests (EEG, EMG, imaging), and manage chronic neurological disease .

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency (after a preliminary year), with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include vascular/stroke neurology, epilepsy, movement disorders, neuromuscular medicine, neurocritical care, and sleep medicine .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Treats	**Brain & nervous system**
Setting	**Clinic & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Gateway to	**Neuro fellowships**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Obstetrics & Gynecology

WHAT IT IS

OB/GYNs care for women's reproductive and general health — pregnancy and childbirth, gynecologic conditions, and preventive care — combining medicine and surgery.

WHAT YOU DO

They provide prenatal care, deliver babies, perform gynecologic surgery, and manage reproductive health across the lifespan.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency combining obstetrics and gynecologic surgery, with optional fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include maternal-fetal medicine (MFM), gynecologic oncology, reproductive endocrinology & infertility (REI), and female pelvic medicine/urogynecology .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Focus	**Women's health**
Setting	**Clinic, OR, L&D**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Gateway to	**OB/GYN fellowships**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Ophthalmology

WHAT IT IS

Ophthalmologists are physicians who medically and surgically treat the eyes and visual system — from glasses and glaucoma to cataract and retinal surgery.

WHAT YOU DO

They diagnose and treat eye disease, prescribe correction, and perform eye surgery ; distinct from optometrists (non-physician) and opticians.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency (after a preliminary year), with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include retina, cornea, glaucoma, pediatric ophthalmology, oculoplastics, and neuro-ophthalmology .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Treats	**Eyes & vision**
Setting	**Clinic & OR**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Includes	**Surgery**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Orthopedic Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Orthopedic surgeons treat the musculoskeletal system — bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, and muscles — through surgery and non-surgical care, from fractures to joint replacement and sports injuries.

WHAT YOU DO

They repair fractures, replace joints, reconstruct ligaments, and treat spine and sports injuries , plus non-operative musculoskeletal care.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5-year residency , with common fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include sports medicine, spine, hand, joint replacement (arthroplasty), trauma, foot & ankle, and pediatric orthopedics .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**5 years**
Focus	**Musculoskeletal surgery**
Setting	**OR & clinic**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**High**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Otolaryngology (ENT)

WHAT IT IS

Otolaryngologists (ENTs) diagnose and surgically treat conditions of the ears, nose, throat, and head and neck — hearing, sinus, airway, thyroid, and head-and-neck cancers.

WHAT YOU DO

They manage hearing and balance, sinus and airway disease, and perform head-and-neck surgery in clinics and operating rooms.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5-year residency , with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include otology/neurotology, rhinology, laryngology, head & neck oncology, facial plastic & reconstructive surgery, and pediatric ENT .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**5 years**
Treats	**Ear, nose, throat, head & neck**
Setting	**Clinic & OR**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Includes	**Surgery**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Pathology

WHAT IT IS

Pathologists diagnose disease by examining tissue, cells, and lab results — the science behind most medical diagnoses. Anatomic pathology examines tissue; clinical pathology runs the lab.

WHAT YOU DO

They read biopsies and specimens, direct laboratory testing, and confirm diagnoses that guide treatment; forensic pathologists investigate deaths.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3–4 year residency (AP, CP, or combined AP/CP), with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include hematopathology, forensic pathology, cytopathology, surgical pathology, molecular pathology, and dermatopathology .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**3–4 years**
Focus	**Diagnosis via lab & tissue**
Setting	**Laboratory**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Role	**The "doctor's doctor"**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Pediatrics

WHAT IT IS

Pediatricians care for the health of infants, children, and adolescents — growth and development, prevention, and childhood illness — through primary care and many subspecialties.

WHAT YOU DO

Pediatricians provide well-child care, immunizations, developmental monitoring, and treatment of childhood illness in clinics and hospitals.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3-year residency , a gateway to pediatric fellowships (1–3 years).

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include neonatology, pediatric cardiology, pediatric hematology/oncology, pediatric critical care, pediatric emergency medicine, and developmental-behavioral pediatrics .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**3 years**
Treats	**Infants–young adults**
Setting	**Clinic & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Gateway to	**Peds fellowships**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Physical Medicine & Rehab

WHAT IT IS

PM&R physicians (physiatrists) help patients restore function and quality of life after injury, illness, or disability — treating pain, mobility, and rehabilitation without surgery.

WHAT YOU DO

They manage rehabilitation after stroke, spinal-cord or brain injury, and musculoskeletal pain , using therapy, injections, and coordinated care.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency (after a preliminary year), with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include pain medicine, sports medicine, spinal-cord injury, brain injury, and pediatric rehabilitation .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 and ~22,100 openings per year. Pay varies widely by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Focus	**Function & rehab**
Setting	**Rehab & clinic**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Also called	**Physiatry**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Plastic Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Plastic surgeons reconstruct and restore form and function — after trauma, cancer, or congenital conditions — and perform aesthetic (cosmetic) surgery. The field blends technical surgery with artistry.

WHAT YOU DO

They perform reconstructive surgery (e.g., after mastectomy, burns, cleft), hand surgery, and cosmetic procedures .

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

~6-year integrated residency (or general surgery + a plastic surgery fellowship).

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include hand surgery, craniofacial surgery, microsurgery, burn surgery, and aesthetic surgery .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**6 years (integrated)**
Focus	**Reconstruction & aesthetics**
Setting	**OR & clinic**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**High**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Preventive Medicine

WHAT IT IS

Preventive medicine physicians focus on protecting and improving the health of populations — through public health, occupational and environmental medicine, and disease prevention — bridging clinical medicine and public health.

WHAT YOU DO

They design and lead prevention programs, work in public health and occupational settings, and address population health , often holding an MPH.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

~2-year residency (after a clinical year), frequently combined with an MPH .

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Areas include public health & general preventive medicine, occupational medicine, and aerospace medicine .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**2 yrs (+ clinical yr)**
Focus	**Population & prevention**
Setting	**Public health, clinic**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Often paired	**MPH**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Psychiatry

WHAT IT IS

Psychiatrists are physicians who diagnose and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders — combining therapy, medication, and medical evaluation. Demand is growing with expanded mental-health access.

WHAT YOU DO

They assess and treat conditions like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and addiction , prescribe medication, and provide or coordinate therapy.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4-year residency , with fellowships for subspecialties.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include child & adolescent psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, and consultation-liaison psychiatry .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**4 years**
Treats	**Mental health**
Setting	**Clinic & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Demand	**Growing**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Radiation Oncology

WHAT IT IS

Radiation oncologists treat cancer using radiation therapy , designing and delivering precise treatments and managing patients through their cancer care.

WHAT YOU DO

They plan and oversee radiation treatment, coordinate with medical and surgical oncologists, and manage side effects for cancer patients.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5-year residency (after a preliminary year).

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Subspecialty focus comes through practice (e.g., pediatric, brachytherapy, or site-specific cancers) rather than a long list of formal fellowships.

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 and ~22,100 openings per year. Pay varies widely by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	Core residency
Residency	5 years
Treats	Cancer (radiation)
Setting	Cancer center
Entry	MD or DO
Pay	High

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Diagnostic Radiology

WHAT IT IS

Diagnostic radiologists use medical imaging — X-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound, and nuclear medicine — to diagnose disease and guide treatment across every field of medicine.

WHAT YOU DO

They interpret imaging studies, consult with treating physicians, and perform image-guided procedures ; interventional radiologists do minimally invasive treatments.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5 years (including an intern year), with fellowships to subspecialize.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include neuroradiology, interventional radiology, musculoskeletal, abdominal, breast imaging, pediatric radiology, and nuclear medicine .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

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AT A GLANCE

Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**5 years**
Focus	**Medical imaging**
Setting	**Reading room & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**High**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency through the national match. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Thoracic Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Thoracic (and cardiac) surgeons operate on the heart, lungs, esophagus, and chest — bypass surgery, valve repair, lung and esophageal cancer, and transplants. It's among the most complex surgical fields.

WHAT YOU DO

They perform heart, lung, and chest operations , from coronary bypass and valve surgery to thoracic oncology and transplantation.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

An integrated 6-year residency or general surgery plus a 2–3 year fellowship .

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Focus areas include adult cardiac, general thoracic, congenital heart, and transplant surgery.

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 . Pay varies by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more. Cardiothoracic surgeons are among...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Residency/fellowship**
Training	**6–8 years**
Treats	**Heart, lungs, chest**
Setting	**OR & hospital**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Pay	**Among the highest**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Urology

WHAT IT IS

Urologists diagnose and treat conditions of the urinary tract and male reproductive system — kidney stones, prostate and bladder disease, cancers, and infertility — medically and surgically.

WHAT YOU DO

They perform urologic surgery (often minimally invasive/robotic), manage stones and cancers, and treat urinary and reproductive disorders .

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

5-year residency , with fellowships.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Fellowships include urologic oncology, endourology, pediatric urology, female urology/reconstruction, and male infertility/andrology .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 . Pay varies by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more. Urologists earn well above the...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Core residency**
Residency	**5 years**
Treats	**Urinary & male repro**
Setting	**Clinic & OR**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Includes	**Surgery**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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Vascular Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Vascular surgeons treat diseases of the arteries and veins (except the heart and brain) — aneurysms, blockages, and circulation problems — using open surgery and minimally invasive endovascular techniques.

WHAT YOU DO

They repair aneurysms, restore blood flow, and manage circulatory disease , increasingly via catheter-based (endovascular) procedures.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

An integrated 5-year residency or general surgery plus a 2-year fellowship .

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Practice focuses (rather than long fellowship lists) include endovascular therapy, aortic disease, and limb salvage .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Physicians are among the highest-paid professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $275,930 for physicians and surgeons (May 2025), with employment projected to grow about 4% from 2025 to 2035 . Pay varies by specialty — procedural and surgical fields generally earn more. Vascular surgeons earn well above...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Residency/fellowship**
Training	**5–7 years**
Treats	**Blood vessels**
Setting	**OR & clinic**
Entry	**MD or DO**
Approach	**Open & endovascular**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a physician first: earn an MD or DO , then match into this residency. Licensure requires completing residency and passing the board exams.

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SECTION 02 OF 02

Dental Residency Specialties

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- Prosthodontics 64

Endodontics

WHAT IT IS

Endodontists specialize in the inside of the tooth — the pulp and root canals — diagnosing tooth pain and performing root canal therapy and related microsurgery to save natural teeth.

WHAT YOU DO

They perform root canals, retreatments, and endodontic microsurgery , and diagnose complex tooth pain.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

2–3 year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Practice centers on root canal therapy, endodontic retreatment, apical surgery, and dental trauma of the pulp .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**2–3 years**
Treats	**Tooth pulp & roots**
Setting	**Clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Known for	**Root canals**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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DENTAL RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

WHAT IT IS

Oral & maxillofacial surgeons operate on the mouth, jaws, face, and neck — extracting impacted teeth, placing implants, correcting jaw deformities, treating facial trauma, and managing oral cancers. It's the surgical dental specialty, bridging dentistry and medicine.

WHAT YOU DO

They perform surgery on the face and jaws — from wisdom teeth and implants to reconstructive and trauma surgery — often in hospitals and surgical centers.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

4–6 year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD (some programs also grant an MD).

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Focus areas include dentoalveolar surgery, implants, orthognathic surgery, trauma, pathology/oncology, and cosmetic facial surgery .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**4–6 years**
Treats	**Mouth, jaw, face**
Setting	**OR & clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Pay	**Top-tier dental**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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DENTAL RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Orthodontics

WHAT IT IS

Orthodontists diagnose and correct misaligned teeth and jaws — using braces, aligners, and appliances — improving bite, function, and appearance. It's one of the most popular and best-paid dental specialties.

WHAT YOU DO

They plan and manage tooth movement and jaw alignment over months to years, using fixed and removable appliances.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

2–3 year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD, then board certification.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Practice focuses include early/interceptive orthodontics, adult orthodontics, and orthognathic (surgical) cases (with oral surgery).

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**2–3 years**
Treats	**Tooth & jaw alignment**
Setting	**Clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Pay	**Top-tier dental**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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DENTAL RESIDENCY SPECIALTIES

Pediatric Dentistry

WHAT IT IS

Pediatric dentists provide dental care for infants, children, adolescents, and special-needs patients — combining child development, behavior management, and prevention with treatment.

WHAT YOU DO

They deliver preventive and restorative care for children , manage dental development, and care for patients with special healthcare needs.

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

2–3 year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Focus areas include infant oral health, behavior guidance, sedation, and care for special-needs patients .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**2–3 years**
Treats	**Children's dentistry**
Setting	**Clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Focus	**Kids & special needs**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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Periodontics

WHAT IT IS

Periodontists specialize in the gums and supporting structures of the teeth — preventing and treating gum disease and placing dental implants.

WHAT YOU DO

They treat periodontal (gum) disease, perform gum surgery and grafts, and place implants .

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3-year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Practice focuses on periodontal therapy, soft-tissue and bone grafting, and dental implant surgery .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE	
Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**3 years**
Treats	**Gums & implants**
Setting	**Clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Focus	**Gum disease, implants**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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Prosthodontics

WHAT IT IS

Prosthodontists specialize in restoring and replacing teeth — crowns, bridges, dentures, implants, and complex reconstruction — restoring function and appearance for damaged or missing teeth.

WHAT YOU DO

They design and place restorations and prostheses , manage complex full-mouth reconstruction, and treat facial/dental defects (maxillofacial prosthetics).

TRAINING PATH & LENGTH

3-year CODA-accredited residency after the DDS/DMD.

FELLOWSHIP SUBSPECIALTIES

Areas include fixed and removable prosthodontics, implant prosthodontics, and maxillofacial prosthetics .

PAY & JOB OUTLOOK

Dentists are well-compensated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median wage of $179,210 for dentists (May 2024), growing about 4% from 2024 to 2034 . Dental specialists — including oral & maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, and prosthodontists — are among the highest-paid , at or above the BLS's top published figure...

AT A GLANCE

Type	**Dental specialty**
Residency	**3 years**
Focus	**Tooth restoration & replacemen...**
Setting	**Clinic**
Entry	**DDS or DMD**
Pay	**Top-tier dental**

HOW TO GET THERE

Become a dentist first: earn a DDS or DMD , then complete this CODA-accredited residency and board certification to practice the specialty.

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