

Cardiothoracic surgeon

Cardiothoracic surgeons specialise in operating on the heart, lungs and other thoracic (chest) organs.

They also diagnose and treat diseases of these organs.

picture of a surgeon

Life as a cardiothoracic surgeon

You'll see the immediate and life-changing results of your work, but your role will be hugely demanding. Diseases that occur in a person's chest are common killers and you'll be managing life and death scenarios every day.

Cardiothoracic surgery is a relatively young speciality that has experienced rapid growth through the introduction of new technologies.

Before surgery you'll meet with patients and their families to discuss and explain procedures and offer reassurance. Being crystal clear, empathetic and warm is vital to the success of your role.

The main areas of cardiothoracic surgery are:

- cardiac surgery
- thoracic surgery
- congenital cardiac surgery
- heart and lung transplant surgery

Monitoring patients in intensive care [1] after surgery is a vital part of your work. Although cardiothoracic surgery is very safe, complications can occur and you'll need to be prepared to deal with a host of conditions including arrhythmias (heart-beat irregularity), post-operative bleeding, stroke [2], pleural effusion (fluid around the lungs), wound infection or thrombosis [3].

As well as performing surgery, you'll be involved in the treatment and management of many different conditions within your speciality. You'll need to attend outpatient clinics, multidisciplinary team meetings and ward rounds.

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your [foundation training](#) ^[4] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[5] and consultants on the ['Pay for doctors'](#) ^[6] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients
- a high degree of manual dexterity
- superb hand-eye co-ordination, excellent vision, and visuospatial awareness
- physical stamina to cope with the demands of surgery

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

"I had some great mentors who gave me the opportunity to operate on patients with supervision, and to look after very sick patients on the [intensive care](#) ^[1] unit after cardiac surgery."

Read Omar's story ^[7].

What are my chances of starting a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon?

There are currently approximately 400 cardiothoracic surgeons working in the NHS in England. In 2020, there were between 5.86 and 9.92 applications for every specialty training place.

How to become a cardiothoracic surgeon

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year foundation programme ^[8] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training ^[9] to become a cardiothoracic surgeon, which will take a minimum of six or seven years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon can take you

Working as a cardiothoracic surgeon, you'll have the opportunity to specialise in cardiac, thoracic or congenital surgery.

As a cardiac surgeon, you'll perform various kinds of surgery including:

- coronary artery bypass surgery – restoring blood flow to the heart by bypassing the narrowed coronary arteries
- heart valve surgery – repairing and replacing narrowed or leaking heart valves
- aortic surgery – replacing an enlarged or damaged blood vessel leaving the heart

If you choose to specialise as a thoracic surgeon, you'll perform a wide range of surgery including:

- surgery for lung cancer, tumours and cysts
- surgery on collapsed or infected lungs
- keyhole thoracic surgery (video assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS))
- chest-wall deformities (pectus surgery)

If you choose congenital cardiac surgery, you'll treat babies and children with heart diseases that have been present from birth. These conditions include:

- septal defects (a hole between two of the heart's chambers)
- aortic and pulmonary valve stenosis (where the valve is narrower than normal)
- transposition of the arteries

You could specialise or conduct research, teach medical students or postgraduate students in training and get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector.

- **Live vacancies**

Find a vacancy

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- **Cardiothoracic Anaesthetic Practitioner**

Headington, OX3 9DU

Salary:

£29970.00 to £36483.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Anaesthetic Practitioner job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[10]

- **Cardiothoracic Anaesthetic Practitioner**

Oxford, OX39DU

Salary:

£29970.00 to £36483.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Anaesthetic Practitioner job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[11]

- **Consultant Cardiothoracic Radiologist**

London, EC1A 7BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiothoracic Radiologist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[12]

- **Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia**

London, EC1A 7BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[13]

- **Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia**

Sheffield, S5 7AU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[14]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip/Knee surgeon)**

Torquay, TQ2 7SS

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon \(Hip/Knee surgeon\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[15]

- **Training Programme Director - Cardiothoracic Surgery**

Oxford, OX4 6LB

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Secondment

Employer:

NHS England

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Training Programme Director - Cardiothoracic Surgery job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[16]

- **Cardiothoracic Cardiology Staff Nurse - Ward**

City of London, EC1A 7BS

Salary:

£36000.00 to £38000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Nuffield Health

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Cardiology Staff Nurse - Ward job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[17]

- **Cardiothoracic Theatre Senior Scrub Practitioner**

Oxford, OX3 9DU

Salary:

£37338.00 to £44962.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Theatre Senior Scrub Practitioner job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Clinical Lead for Cardiothoracic Theatres**

Cardiff, CF14 4XW

Salary:

£46840.00 to £53602.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Clinical Lead for Cardiothoracic Theatres job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[19]

- **Consultant Vascular Surgeon**

Blackburn, BB2 3HH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Vascular Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[20]

- **Consultant Urological Surgeon**

Oxford, OX3 7LE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[21]

- **Consultant Colorectal Surgeon**

Bournemouth & Poole, BH7 7DW

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[22]

- **Consultant Colorectal Surgeon**

King's Lynn, PE30 4ET

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHSFT

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[23]

- **Consultant Vascular Surgeon**

Exeter, EX2 5DW

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Vascular Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[24]

- **Consultant General Surgeon**

Blackburn, BB2 3HH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[25]

- **Consultant Urological Surgeon**

Torquay, TQ2 7AA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[26]

- **Consultant - Urological Surgeon**

Slough, SL2 4HL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant - Urological Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[27]

- **Consultant Dermatology Surgeon**

Canterbury, CT1 3NG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Dermatology Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[28]

- **Consultant Vascular Surgeon**

Sheffield, S5 7AU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Vascular Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[29]

- **Consultant Breast Surgeon**

Ilford, IG3 8YB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[30]

- **Consultant Breast Surgeon**

Dartford, DA2 8DA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[31]

- **Cardiothoracic Support Team Deputy Sister/Charge Nurse**

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£37338.00 to £44962.00

Type:

Secondment

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Support Team Deputy Sister/Charge Nurse job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[32]

- **Consult Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon**

Chesterfield, S44 5BL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consult Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[33]

- **Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon**

Northampton, NN1 5DB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Northampton General Hospital

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[34]

- **Locum Consultant ENT Surgeon**

Wakefield, WF1 4DG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

The Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant ENT Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[35]

- **Colorectal Surgeon – General Colorectal**

Birmingham, B15 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Colorectal Surgeon – General Colorectal job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[36]

- **Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon**

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[37]

- **Consultant Colorectal/Peritoneal Surgeon**

Manchester, M20 4BX

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Christie NHS FT

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal/Peritoneal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[38]

- **Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon**

Sheffield, S10 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[39]

- **Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon**

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[40]

- **Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon**

London, E1 1FR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[41]

- **Consultant Colorectal/General Surgeon**

Sunderland, SR4 7TP

South Shields, NE34 0PL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal/General Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[42]

- **Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee**

Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Salary:

£7200.00

Type:

Bank

Employer:

Medinet Clinical Services Limited

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[43]

- **Consultant in General Radiology (Interest in Cardiothoracic Imaging)**

Salisbury, SP2 8BJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in General Radiology \(Interest in Cardiothoracic Imaging\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[44]

- **Consultant Head & Neck ENT Surgeon**

London, NW1 2BU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Head & Neck ENT Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[45]

- **Consultant Onco Plastic Breast Surgeon**

Maidstone, ME16 9QQ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Onco Plastic Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[46]

- **Consultant HPB and General Surgeon**

Nottingham, NG7 2UH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trusts

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant HPB and General Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[47]

- **Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon**

Salisbury, SP2 8BJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[48]

- **Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon**

London, SW3 6JJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[49]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle**

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[50]

- **Locum Consultant Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Surgeon**

London, E1 1FR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[51]

- **Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon**

Rhyl, LL18 5UJ

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[52]

- **Consultant in General Surgery - Consultant Surgeon**

Reading, RG1 5AN

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in General Surgery - Consultant Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[53]

- **Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon - Fixed Term**

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon - Fixed Term job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[54]

- **Consultant General and Benign Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeon**

Wigan, WN1 2NN

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Wrightington Wigan & Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General and Benign Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[55]

- **Locum Consultant Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon**

London, SW10 9NH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[56]

- **Locum Urological Surgeon Specialized in Cancer Diagnosis Management**

London, E9 6SR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Urological Surgeon Specialized in Cancer Diagnosis Management job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[57]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - interest in Lower Limb Arthroplasty**

Coventry, CV2 2DX

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - interest in Lower Limb Arthroplasty job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[58]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee**

Stoke on Trent, ST4 6QG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[59]

- **Consultant Surgeon with a Special Interest in Dermatology**

Kettering, NN16 8UZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Surgeon with a Special Interest in Dermatology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[60]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon with interest in Hip and Knee Surgery**

Northampton, NN1 5BD

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Northampton General Hospital

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon with interest in Hip and Knee Surgery job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[61]

• Further information

These organisations have further information about being a cardiothoracic surgeon, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[Royal College of Surgeons](#) [62]

[Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#) [63]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) [64]

[Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Great Britain and Ireland](#) [65]

And hear from people working as cardiothoracic surgeons.

[A career in cardiothoracic surgery \(BMJ\)](#) [66]

[A day in the life of a thoracic surgeon \(CTSNET\)](#) [67]

[A day in a heart surgeon's life \(CTSNET\)](#) [68]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Cardiologist](#) [69]
- [Emergency medicine](#) [70]
- [Respiratory medicine](#) [71]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [72]

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