

## General surgery

General surgeons perform a wide range of surgery, often in emergency situations, and make up 25% of all consultant surgeons.

They experience a highly competitive but hugely rewarding career performing life-changing and life-saving surgery.



### Life as a general surgeon

You'll be part of one of the largest surgical specialties and expected to perform a wide range of surgeries involving:

- surgical conditions of the gastrointestinal tract from the oesophagus to the anus
- breast conditions
- kidney, pancreas and liver transplantation
- trauma to the abdomen and thorax

- certain skin conditions
- initial assessment of patients with peripheral vascular disease
- childhood conditions

**Elective** <sup>[1]</sup> (planned) surgery is an important part of the work but also, you'll play an important role within emergency departments. Acute abdominal pain is the most common emergency requiring surgery, and you'll regularly operate for conditions such as appendicitis, hernias and gallstones.

Advances in technology have made keyhole surgery (laparoscopic surgery) increasingly commonplace and you'll use it within general surgery. Most abdominal operations including bowel tumour removal and hernia repair can be carried out using keyhole surgery.

You'll have the opportunity to specialise in keyhole surgery as well as a broad range of sub-specialties.

## How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your **foundation training** <sup>[2]</sup> after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £29,384 to £34,012. Once you start your specialty training as a general surgeon employed by the NHS, you can expect to earn a salary of at least £40,257, which can increase to between £84,559 and £114,003 as a consultant.

## 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

- 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
- 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

## 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 decided that I wanted to become a surgeon during my third year at medical school, when the course included a two-month hospital placement in [colorectal](#) <sup>[3]</sup> surgery. The surgeons made me feel really welcome and I loved the work and the theatre environment from day one."**

**Read Bynvant's story <sup>[4]</sup>.**

## What are my chances of starting a career as a general surgeon?

There are approximately 2,571 general surgeons working in the NHS in England.

## How to become a general surgeon

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year foundation programme <sup>[5]</sup> where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training <sup>[6]</sup> to become a general surgeon, which will take a minimum of eight 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 general surgeon can take you

Sub-specialties within general surgery include:

- breast surgery – assessment of breast symptoms, breast cancer surgery and breast reconstructive surgery where a plastic surgeon is not needed
- lower gastrointestinal surgery – for the diseases of the colon, rectum and anal canal, and particularly cancer of the bowel
- endocrine surgery – for thyroid and other endocrine glands
- upper gastrointestinal – this includes the oesophagus, stomach, liver and pancreas and also incorporates weight-loss surgery
- transplant surgery – renal (kidney), hepatic (liver) and pancreatic transplantations

Specialist training is also provided for advanced trauma surgery (for military surgery and trauma centres) and for remote and rural surgery.

## Live vacancies

### General Surgeon

Ilford, IG3 8YY

Salary:

£120000.00 to £120000.00 a year up to •120,000 pro-rata

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

Apply now on NHS Jobs for General Surgeon job (opens in a new window) <sup>[7]</sup>

### General Surgeon

Bristol, BS16 7FH

Salary:

£125400.00 a year Up to •125,400 per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

Apply now on NHS Jobs for General Surgeon job (opens in a new window) <sup>[8]</sup>

### General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon

Fulwood, PR2 9WT

Salary:

Depending on experience

Type:

Bank

Employer:

CHEC

Apply now on NHS Jobs for General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon job  
(opens in a new window) <sup>[9]</sup>

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## **General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon**

Gateshead, NE11 9YG

Salary:

Depending on experience

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

CHEC

Apply now on NHS Jobs for General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon job  
(opens in a new window) <sup>[10]</sup>

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## **General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon**

Worcester, WR1 2DD

Salary:

Depending on experience

Type:

Bank

Employer:

CHEC

Apply now on NHS Jobs for General Ophthalmology and Cataract Surgeon job  
(opens in a new window) <sup>[11]</sup>

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## **Consultant General Surgeon - Colorectal Surgery**

Crewe, CW1 4QJ

Salary:

£88364.00 to £119133.00 a year per annum pro rata

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon - Colorectal Surgery job  
(opens in a new window) <sup>[12]</sup>

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## Further information

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

Association of Trauma and Military Surgery <sup>[13]</sup>

Association of Breast Surgery <sup>[14]</sup>

Association for Cancer Surgery <sup>[15]</sup>

Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland <sup>[16]</sup>

Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland <sup>[17]</sup>

Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland <sup>[18]</sup>

Association of Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeons for Great Britain and Ireland <sup>[19]</sup>

British Association of Endocrine and Thyroid Surgeons <sup>[20]</sup>

British Transplantation Society <sup>[21]</sup>

Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations <sup>[22]</sup>

Royal College of Surgeons <sup>[23]</sup>

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh <sup>[24]</sup>

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow <sup>[25]</sup>

Vascular Society <sup>[26]</sup>

## Other roles that may interest you

- Anaesthesia <sup>[27]</sup>
- Emergency medicine <sup>[28]</sup>
- Medical oncology <sup>[29]</sup>
- Experienced paramedic <sup>[30]</sup>

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery>

### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Elective>

[2] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation\\_training](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training)

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Colorectal>

- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery/real-life-story-bynvant-sandhu>
- [5] <https://foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/>
- [6] <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/>
- [7] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917581692>
- [8] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917611523>
- [9] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917573290>
- [10] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917573367>
- [11] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917562389>
- [12] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917598073>
- [13] <http://www.atms.org.uk/default.aspx>
- [14] <http://www.associationofbreastsurgery.org.uk/>
- [15] <http://www.baso.org.uk/>
- [16] <http://www.acpgbi.org.uk/>
- [17] <http://www.alsgbi.org/>
- [18] <http://www.asgbi.org.uk/>
- [19] <http://www.augis.org/>
- [20] <http://www.baets.org.uk/>
- [21] <http://www.bts.org.uk/>
- [22] <http://www.jcie.org.uk>
- [23] <http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>
- [24] <http://www.rcsed.ac.uk>
- [25] <http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk>
- [26] <http://www.vascularsociety.org.uk/>
- [27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/anaesthesia>
- [28] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/emergency-medicine>
- [29] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/medical-oncology>
- [30] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic>