

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.

surgeon with tools

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 ^[1] (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](#) ^[2] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[3] and consultants on the ['Pay for doctors'](#) ^[4] 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

- 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](#) ^[5] surgery. The surgeons made me feel

really welcome and I loved the work and the theatre environment from day one."

[Read Bynvant's story](#) ^[6].

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 ^[7] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training ^[8] 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**

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

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- **OMFS Consultant Surgeon**

Plymouth, PL6 8DH

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for OMFS Consultant Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[9]

- **Consultant ENT Surgeon**

Luton, LU4 0DZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant ENT Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[10]

- **Consultant Hand Surgeon**

Doncaster, DN40TG

Barnsley, S71 1TH

Sheffield, S105UB

Sheffield, S80YH

Sheffield, S61GA

Rotherham, S639EH

Barnsley, S728SU

Sheffield, S56AZ

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Locum

Employer:

HealthHarmonie

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

[11]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon**

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

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

- **Consultant Urological Surgeon**

Salford, M6 8HD

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust

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

- **Consultant Prostate Surgeon**

Southampton, SO16 6YD

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospital Southampton NHS Trust

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

- **Consultant Cardiac Surgeon**

Oxford, OX3 9DU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiac Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[15]

- **Consultant Breast Surgeon**

Barnsley, S75 2EP

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[16]

- **Consultant Vascular Surgeon**

London, SE5 9RS

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Vascular Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[17]

- **ToP Surgeon (Rotherham)**

Rotherham, S60 1FL

Salary:

£78488.17 to £109691.14

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

MSI Reproductive Choices

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for ToP Surgeon \(Rotherham\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Consultant Cardiac Surgeon**

Brighton, BN2 5BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (279)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiac Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[19]

- **Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon**

Watford, WD18 0HB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

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

- **Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon**

Basildon/Broomfield/Southend, CM1 7ET

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

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

- **Locum Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon**

Camberwell, SE5 9RS

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

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

- **Locum Consultant Urological Surgeon**

Northampton, NN1 5BD

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Northampton General Hospital

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

- **Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon**

Wolverhampton, WV10 0QP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

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

- **Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon**

Lancaster, LA14RP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust

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

- **Consultant Surgeon - Orthopaedics & Trauma**

Braddan, IM4 4RJ

Salary:

£107208.00 to £185166.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Manx Care

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

- **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 \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[27]

- **Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours**

Reading, RG1 4QA

Salary:

£101000.00 to £151000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[28]

- **Consultant Colorectal and General Surgeon**

Dorchester, DT1 2JY

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

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

- **Fellowship-trained Foot & Ankle Surgeon**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Fellowship-trained Foot & Ankle Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[30]

- **Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon - Oculoplastic & General Ophthalmology**

Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 2QZ

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon - Oculoplastic & General Ophthalmology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[31]

- **Locum Consultant Plastic and Breast Surgeon**

Nottingham, NG5 1PB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trusts

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic and Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[32]

- **Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon - Hand Specialist**

Salisbury, SP2 8BJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon - Hand Specialist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[33]

- **Locum Urological Surgeon Specialized General & Reconstructive Surgery**

London, E9 6SR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Urological Surgeon Specialized General & Reconstructive Surgery job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[34]

- **Consultant Plastic Surgeon (Burns / General Plastic Surgery)**

Wakefield, WF14DG

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic Surgeon \(Burns / General Plastic Surgery\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[35]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon – Upper Limb or Shoulder & Elbow**

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon – Upper Limb or Shoulder & Elbow job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[36]

- **Consultant Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon, Hand and Wrist**

Wythenshawe, M23 9LT

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon, Hand and Wrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[37]

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

London, E9 6SR

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Urological Surgeon Specialized in Cancer Diagnosis Management job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[38]

- **Locum Consultant Paediatric Surgeon with Interest in Oncology**

Leeds, LS1 3EX

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Leeds Teaching Hospitals

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

- **Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon with specialist interest in Paediatrics**

Watford, WD18 0HB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon with specialist interest in Paediatrics job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[40]

- **Consultant General Surgeon WSI Benign Upper GI Surgery**

Warwick, CV34 5BW

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon WSI Benign Upper GI Surgery job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[41]

- **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 \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[42]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (special interest in Hand and Wrist)**

Barnsley, S75 2EP

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon \(special interest in Hand and Wrist\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[43]

- **Consultant in Trauma and Orthopaedics - Hand and Wrist Surgeon**

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Trauma and Orthopaedics - Hand and Wrist Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[44]

- **Locum ENT Consultant Surgeon with specialist interest in Paeds Otology**

London, E9 6SR

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum ENT Consultant Surgeon with specialist interest in Paeds Otolaryngology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[45]

- **Locum ENT Consultant Surgeon with a specialist interest in Otolaryngology**

London, E9 6SR

Salary:

£109725.00 to £145478.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum ENT Consultant Surgeon with a specialist interest in Otolaryngology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[46]

- **Locum Consultant General Surgeon with an interest in Upper GI**

Blackpool, FY3 8NR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant General Surgeon with an interest in Upper GI job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[47]

- **Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon in Hand Surgery or Skin and General**

Bradford, BD9 6RJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon in Hand Surgery or Skin and General job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[48]

- **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](#) [49]

[Association of Breast Surgery](#) [50]

[Association for Cancer Surgery](#) [51]

[Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland](#) [52]

[Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland](#) [53]

[Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland](#) [54]

[Association of Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeons for Great Britain and Ireland](#) [55]

[British Association of Endocrine and Thyroid Surgeons](#) [56]

[British Transplantation Society](#) [57]

[Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations](#) [58]

[Royal College of Surgeons](#) [59]

[Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#) [60]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) [61]

[Vascular Society](#) [62]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Anaesthesia](#) [63]
- [Emergency medicine](#) [64]
- [Medical oncology](#) [65]
- [Plastic surgery](#) [66]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Elective> [2]

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<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/career-opportunities-doctors/sas-doctors> [4]

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/pay-doctors> [5]

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Colorectal> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery/real-life-story-bynvant-sandhu> [7]

<https://foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/> [8] <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/> [9]

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