

Allergy

Allergists are doctors who diagnose and manage people affected by a wide range of allergic conditions such as asthma, eczema and food and drug allergies.

You'll work with a wide range of patients and conditions in what is a fascinating role.

Doctor and nurse at PC

Life as an allergist

Increasingly, allergists specialise in paediatric or adult allergy, but you may see patients of all ages and from diverse backgrounds.

You'll experience a huge variety of conditions. On any given day, you'll desensitise a patient to a life-threatening allergy such as wasp venom or peanuts, manage a patient with severe asthma, diagnose allergy and interpret allergy tests.

Conditions can affect every part of the human body. Some people have allergic responses if substances are ingested through the lungs, the skin, the stomach, or mucous membranes such as the lining of the eye.

Conditions you'll treat include:

- asthma
- hay fever
- dermatitis
- eczema
- [urticaria](#) ^[1] (a raised, itchy rash on the skin known as hives, nettle rash and welts)
- [angioedema](#) ^[2] (the swelling of deeper layers of skin caused by a build-up of fluid)

Common procedures and interventions include:

- skin prick, RAST (blood), patch and food tests to identify what is triggering a patient's allergy
- desensitisation treatments
- [corticosteroid](#) ^[3] treatments to suppress allergic reactions such as vasculitis (chronic inflammation of the blood vessels)
- prescription of antihistamines to treat [urticaria](#) ^[1] (skin rashes)

- injection of adrenaline to treat anaphylaxis (an immediate and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction)
- treatment of allergic rhinitis with antihistamine drugs
- intramuscular adrenaline and antihistamine treatment for angio-oedema ^[4] (build-up of fluid beneath the skin)
- lung x-rays, blood tests and lung function tests to assist in the diagnosis of extrinsic allergic alveolitis (resulting from prolonged exposure to animal and vegetable dusts)

In the past 30 years, the incidence of allergic disease has increased by over a third worldwide. Consequently, there is an increase in demand for allergists while opportunities for research and teaching are also on the rise.

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training ^[5] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[6] and consultants on the ['Pay for doctors'](#) ^[7] 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

In addition, allergists need to demonstrate:

- an interest in working across the full spectrum of organs and body systems
- functional abilities such as observation, analysis and assessment, recording, manual dexterity, practical and procedural skills

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.

"For me, the interest in allergy comes mainly from the variety of patients we see. We deal with conditions involving almost every part of human body, literally from heads to toes, and often the psyche too. The presence or absence of allergy (in almost equal measures) is the common denominator."

[Read Joanna's story](#) ^[8].

How to become an allergist

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year [foundation programme](#) ^[9] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid [specialty training](#) ^[10] to become an allergist, which will take a minimum of five 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 an allergist can take you

You could:

- specialise or conduct research
- teach medical students or postgraduate students in training?
- get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector

• **Live vacancies**

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

Search

• Further information

These organisations have further information about being a doctor in allergy, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[Royal College of Physicians](#) ^[11]

[Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh](#) ^[12]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) ^[13]

[British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology \(BSACI\)](#) ^[14]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Immunology](#) ^[15]
- [Respiratory medicine](#) ^[16]
- [Dermatology](#) ^[17]
- [Paediatrician](#) ^[18]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/allergy?field_field_role=349&page=12&destination=/my-account/my-bookmarks/438

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Urticaria> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Angioedema> [3]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Corticosteroid> [4]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Oedema> [5]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training [6]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/career-opportunities-doctors/sas-doctors> [7]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/pay-doctors> [8]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/allergy/real-life-story-dr-joanna-lukawska> [9] <https://foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/> [10] <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/> [11]
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/allergy> [12] <http://www.rcpe.ac.uk/> [13] <http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk> [14]
<http://www.bsaci.org> [15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/immunology> [16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/respiratory-medicine> [17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/dermatology> [18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/paediatrics/paediatrician>