Infectious diseases

Doctors working in infectious diseases diagnose, investigate and treat infections caused by micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa and fungi.

You'll combine your clinical and laboratory skills to diagnose and provide effective treatment for a wide range of infectious diseases.

Life in infectious diseases

There are four distinct but interdependent infection specialties: infectious diseases, medical microbiology, medical virology and tropical medicine.

So, among other conditions, you could treat:

- bone infections
- HIV
- pneumonia
- viral hepatitis (inflammation of the liver)

The role is rapidly changing due to:

- an increase in resistance to antibiotics
- an increase in the severity of infections particularly in an ageing and more frail population
- the growing popularity of global travel heightening the need for expertise in the prevention and treatment of ‘international’ diseases

You’ll regularly deliver:

- drug prescription
- insertion of a central venous catheter [1] – a thin flexible hollow tube is inserted into a large vein for the introduction of fluids including medication
- lumbar puncture [2] - a hollow needle is inserted into the lower part of the spinal canal to withdraw cerebrospinal fluid for diagnosis or to inject medication
- sigmoidoscopy (examination of part of the intestine using a very small camera)

How much can I earn?

You’ll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training [3] after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £29,384 to £34,012. Once you start your specialty training as a doctor in infectious diseases 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

- 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.

What are my chances of starting a career in infectious diseases?

There are approximately 130 consultants working in infectious diseases in the NHS in England.

How to become an infectious diseases doctor

After medical school, you’ll join the paid two-year foundation programme [4] where you’ll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training [5] to become a doctor in infectious diseases, which will take a minimum of seven or 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 in infectious diseases can take you

Infectious diseases is a wide and varied area and you’ll have many opportunities to specialise.

You can also combine your training with either general internal medicine or with medical microbiology (or virology) and tropical medicine.

You’ll also have opportunities to conduct research and teach.
Consultant in Infectious Diseases/Med. Micro or Gen. Internal Medicine

London, SE1 9RT

Salary: £84559.00 to £114003.00 a year per annum
Type: Permanent
Employer: Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Infectious Diseases/Med. Micro or Gen. Internal Medicine job (opens in a new window) [6]

Consultant Medical Microbiologist/Infectious Diseases Physician

61 Colindale Ave, NW9 5EQ

Salary: £79592.00 to £119133.00 a year per annum (pro rata)
Type: Permanent
Employer: UK Health Security Agency

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Medical Microbiologist/Infectious Diseases Physician job (opens in a new window) [7]

Further information

These organisations have further information about being an infectious diseases doctor, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

British HIV Association [8]
British Infection Association [9]
European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases [10]
Royal College of Physicians [11]
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh [12]
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow [13]
Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene [14]

And read this article about working in infectious diseases medicine:
Dr Karen Devine – ST4, infectious diseases (RCPE) [15]

Other roles that may interest you

- Acute internal medicine [16]
- Emergency medicine [17]
- Genitourinary medicine [18]
- Medical microbiology and virology (doctor) [19]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/infectious-diseases

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Catheter
[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training
[10] https://www.escmid.org/
[14] https://rstmh.org/