Genitourinary medicine

Doctors working in genitourinary medicine diagnose and treat people with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

Your role is to detect and manage, prevent and control STIs, and manage a number of non-infectious genital conditions such as dermatoses.

Life as a doctor in genitourinary medicine

Your role is mostly outpatient or clinic based. As a trainee, you’ll be expected to conduct a minimum number of HIV outpatient clinics per week and once you’re a specialist, you’ll see 10–20 clinic patients over a two-day period.

Your time spent in hospital will be on wards caring for HIV patients. You’ll participate in ward rounds and consult with other doctors and nurses. HIV patients often have complex medical problems as well as various psychological challenges.

Most of your patients will be young adults from a broad cultural and social mix and represent
all sexual orientations. Otherwise, the majority of your patients will be fit and healthy.

Bacterial STIs are curable and, while some viral STIs cannot be cured, they can be managed successfully.

You’ll find that most patients are extremely grateful for your diagnosis, treatment and advice, for example on how to communicate with sexual partners. The focus on access, education and care can make your role particularly satisfying.

You’ll see patients with a range of STIs including:

- chlamydia
- genital herpes
- genital warts
- gonorrhoea
- syphilis
- HIV
- vaginal infections
- pelvic infection and inflammation
- genital infestations such as scabies and pubic lice

Common procedures and interventions include:

- a sexual screen which may include an examination to take genital microbiological samples
- treatment with the use of specific antimicrobials (agents that kill or inhibit the growth of micro-organisms)
- outpatient minor surgical procedures such as cryocautery (a procedure that uses very high temperatures to treat the female genital tract)
- light microscopy and dark ground microscopy (where the field around the specimen is dark)
- skin biopsies and the insertion and removal of contraceptive devices including contraceptive implants and intra-uterine devices (IUDs)

**How much can I earn?**

You’ll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training [1] after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £29,384 to £34,012. Once you start your specialty training as a doctor in genitourinary medicine 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

In addition, doctors in genitourinary medicine need to demonstrate:

• an open-minded, sensitive, non-judgemental approach
• tolerance of all patients regardless of age, race, gender or sexuality
• a holistic [2] approach to patient care

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 genitourinary medicine?

In 2021, there were 227 consultants in genitourinary medicine in the NHS in England. In addition, there were 30 applications for 38 training places.

How to become a doctor in genitourinary medicine

After medical school, you’ll join the paid two-year foundation programme [3] where you’ll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training [4] to become a doctor in genitourinary medicine, which will take a minimum of seven years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or
Where a career as a doctor in genitourinary medicine 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

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Further information

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

British Association for Sexual Health and HIV [5]

British HIV Association [6]

The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London [7]

Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare [8]
Other roles that may interest you

- Obstetrics and gynaecology [9]
- Paediatric cardiology [10]
- General practitioner [11]
- Medical microbiology and virology (doctor) [12]

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

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training