

Why study medicine?

This page looks at the reasons why you might want to study medicine. It mentions the things you should consider and helps you think about whether medicine is the right career for you.

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A career in medicine can be very rewarding. It may appeal to you because:

- you can make a real difference to people's lives by helping to alleviate pain and suffering
- it's a respected profession
- there's a wide choice of careers – in fact there are over 60 specialties and there are opportunities to get involved with teaching, research and management
- the day-to-day work can be very varied
- you will face all kinds of practical and intellectual challenges
- once you graduate, you'll earn a reasonable salary ^[1] and this increases with experience
- doctors will always be in demand

The training pathway

After gaining your medical degree, you take a two-year Foundation Programme. This is followed by training either as a GP (currently lasting three years) or in a specialty (taking five to eight years).

• Things to consider

There are a number of factors to consider when considering training to become a doctor, including the following:

- entry to medical school is very competitive and requires you to get very good A level grades (or equivalent level 3 qualifications)
- studying medicine and working as a doctor usually involves long, sometimes unsocial hours
- you'll need emotional resilience to cope with the demands of the job, such as dealing with suffering and dying patients and their relatives
- during your training you might need to relocate

- the lengthy undergraduate training can be expensive, but financial support ^[2] is available and you may be entitled to additional support through the NHS during the latter stages of medical school.
- the NHS is a service-orientated organisation. The UK has an ageing population, and many patients have chronic conditions. Much of this care will be delivered in the community, so currently 50% of the specialty training opportunities are in general practice.
- training can be pressurised and that you will also need to study hard and pass college exams once you start your specialty training

• Is medicine right for you?

Studying medicine is a big commitment, so it's important to find out as much as possible before you apply.

- use our Explore roles ^[3] pages to see the range of doctor roles and discover what each involves
- discuss your career ideas with your teachers, personal tutor and careers adviser if there is one at your school or college
- also speak with your family and friends, but remember that your career should be your decision not anyone else's
- try to speak with a doctor about their career or arrange to shadow a doctor ^[4]
- paid or unpaid work experience in a healthcare setting may help you make a decision ^[5]
- attend open day and take any opportunity you have to go to talks about medical careers
- some medical schools run summer schools or taster courses. Information will be on medical school websites. They last from one day to a week and are usually held in the spring or summer before you apply. Places fill up quickly, so book early

Find out more about applying to medical school ^[6].

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/why-study-medicine>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-medicine/pay-doctors> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/financial-support-university/financial-support-medical-and-dental> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/going-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical-school> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical/paid-work> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-medicine/applying-medical-school>