Specialty Information: General Surgery

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A general surgeon has expertise in the diagnosis and care of patients with diseases and disorders affecting the abdomen, digestive tract, endocrine system, breast, skin, and blood vessels. A general surgeon is also trained in the care of pediatric and cancer patients and in the treatment of patients who are injured or critically ill. Common problems treated by general surgeons include hernias, breast tumors, gallstones, appendicitis, pancreatitis, bowel obstructions, colon inflammation, and colon cancer. General surgeons increasingly provide care through the use of minimally invasive and endoscopic techniques.¹

Surgeons can receive training in subspecialties such as:

- **pediatric surgery**, which requires expertise in surgical conditions in premature and newborn infant, children, and adolescents.
- **surgical critical care**, which requires expertise in the critically ill and postoperative patient, particularly the trauma victim and those with multiple organ dysfunction.
- **vascular surgery**, which requires expertise in surgical disorders of the blood vessels, excluding the intracranial vessels of the heart.

General Surgeons are also important members of a hospital’s trauma team, and are required to have ATLS certification.

**Training/Residency**

The residency for general surgery is five years. Up to two years of additional training is required to practice in one of the subspecialty areas.

AOA residency training opportunities are listed here: [http://opportunities.osteopathic.org/index.htm](http://opportunities.osteopathic.org/index.htm)

**Statewide Campus System (SCS)**

The (SCS) is made up of 46 training hospitals and 31 FQHCs in Michigan. There are 224 approved postdoctoral training programs representing 47 specialties throughout the state. Michigan currently has 151 General Surgery residents training in 13 osteopathic GS programs (2013). More information about these programs can be found at: [http://scs.msu.edu](http://scs.msu.edu)

**Salary Information**

According to Salary.com the average annual salary for a general surgeon in Michigan ranges from approximately $225,000–$427,000+.²


**For more information about the specialty**

- American College of Osteopathic Surgeons ([www.acos.org](http://www.acos.org))
- American College of Surgeons ([www.facs.org](http://www.facs.org))
- American Board of Surgery ([www.absurgery.org](http://www.absurgery.org))
- American Society of General Surgeons ([www.theasgs.org](http://www.theasgs.org))

**References**

2. Information link to a salary search performed on [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
Sample Questions to Ask When Exploring A Career in General Surgery

- How much time do you spend providing inpatient care vs. outpatient care?
- How much time do you spend doing chart documentation and other patient paperwork (insurance requests, prescription refills, etc.)?
- Which journals do you read regularly?
- Do you sub-specialize?
- Are you actively involved in research? How much time do you spend in research activities?
- What is a typical day like for you as a general surgeon?
- Do you practice OMT with your patients? If so, about what percentage of your patients do you practice OMT on? Is it more at the request of the patient, or your suggestion?
- Do you work in a rural or urban area? What are the pros & cons of practicing in this type of community?
- How has your job changed over the past 5 years?
- What are the most frequent types of cases you see on a daily basis?
- How often are you on-call?
- How many patients do you usually see in a day or a week?
- How many hours a week do you actually work? What are your feelings on work-life balance for a general surgeon?
- How do you feel about working with different age ranges? Do you have a preference?
- How much time do you spend providing diagnostic care vs. doing procedures? What types of procedures do you perform most often?
- How much business knowledge do you use as a general surgeon?
- What kind of employment model do you work in (e.g. solo practice, group practice, private practice, hospital employed, etc.)? What do you consider to be the pros and cons of these models?
- How much professional liability insurance does a general surgeon need to carry? About how much does that cost annually?