



## Health Career Directory

### Physician (General Practitioner or Family Physician)

<http://www.careertrekbc.ca/episode/general-practitioner#>

#### What would I do?

Family doctors identify and treat diseases and injuries in a private practice clinic, community health centre, nursing home or hospital. They also look for health risks, address health prevention (immunizations, treatments, etc.), and manage end-of-life issues.

#### What skills do I need?

- the intellectual ability required to successfully complete the required academic training and to continue learning life long
- the ability to get along with people and instil confidence
- the stamina required to work long hours
- emotional strength and maturity
- good communication skills
- the ability to work effectively in a health care team
- the ability to find solutions to problems; and
- the ability to coordinate the work of others.

#### What education do I need?

To be a family doctor, you require good grades in mathematics and the sciences while in secondary school.

A doctor of medicine degree (MD) is required to work in this field. To get an MD requires three years of undergraduate studies, as well as four years of medical school, with an additional two years of residency training.

Medical schools have demanding academic admission requirements. University medical programs conduct interviews to ensure that applicants, who have acceptable academic credentials, also have the appropriate social skills and attitudes to work as medical professionals.

Graduates of medical programs have to have two years of recognized residency training. The residency programs are competitive and may require graduates to travel to other provinces in order to get a placement. Residents spend most of their time in community practices working with family doctors and their clinical teams. Residents will also spend four or eight weeks working

in specific areas of the medical profession, such as medicine, surgery, paediatrics and psychiatry.

To become a fully licensed physician in BC, graduates must pass the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination. As well, they must also become licensed through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

In addition, family doctors have to pass a national exam administered by the College of Family Physicians of Canada within five years of start of practice. Continuing medical education and professional development are required throughout the careers of family doctors. This ensures that in a rapidly changing medical and scientific world family doctors are giving patients the most modern forms of treatment. All family doctors are also required to complete a minimum of 50 hours per year (on average) of documented continuing professional education throughout their career.

### **What would be my main roles and responsibilities?**

Family doctors may perform some or all of the following duties:

- Examine patients and take their medical histories, order laboratory tests, X-rays and other diagnostic procedures. Consult with other medical practitioners to evaluate patients' physical and mental health.
- Prescribe medications and oversee treatments.
- Perform minor surgery and assist with other surgical procedures.
- Provide chronic (long-lasting) disease management care.
- Provide primary mental health care.
- Provide emergency care.
- Provide acute (critical) care management.
- Inoculate and vaccinate patients.
- Advise patients and their families on health care. This includes health promotion, disease, illness, accident prevention and end of life care,
- Provide counselling and support to patients and their families on a wide range of health and lifestyle issues.
- Advocate for patient care.
- Co-ordinate or manage primary patient care.
- Provide continuous care to patients, including palliative (end of life) care support.
- Supervise home-care services.
- Report births, deaths, and contagious and other diseases to governmental authorities.
- Deliver babies and provide pre-natal and post-natal care.

### **What are the working conditions like?**

Family doctors are mostly self-employed; others work for health authorities in BC under a contract or fee for service. They often work irregular hours, including nights and weekends. They may also be on-call 24 hours a day when required to respond to emergencies. Resident physicians generally work long hours, which could be up to 60 hours per week.

Improvements in technology have led to changes in the way care is provided. Family doctors are increasingly using electronic resources to support patient care, including electronic medical records, electronic prescribing, and electronic results access. They are also utilizing computer-based education and information resources more frequently. Furthermore, the interaction

between patients and doctors may happen via electronic means, such as telephone or email more often.

Family doctors spend most of their time in their practice/clinic. However, they may need to travel to hospitals in order to provide specific types of patient care if they have hospital privileges. Not all family doctors have hospital privileges.

Family doctors generally see a lot of patients that require different types of assessments, support, or treatment each day. As a result, there is a lot of variety in a family doctor's daily work.

Due to the nature of the work, family doctors may be exposed to infectious diseases. As a result, family doctors must be very careful to follow established infection control procedures while examining patients. Necessary precautions include the use of safety equipment and clothing, and the sterilization or disposal of some equipment and protective clothing after use.

In addition, family doctors must be prepared to handle the often fragile emotional state of their patients. This, combined with long working hours, a high volume of patients, a diverse range of treatments administered, and strict safety precautions, can create a stressful working environment.

### **What are my employment prospects?**

Employment prospects for family doctors is expected to increase over the next several years as a growing and ageing population will require more health services.

Family doctors who move to rural communities to practice medicine may receive additional financial incentives. These incentives might be signing bonuses, student loan reductions, fee-for-service, and flat sum premiums.

### **List of Canadian Medical Schools**

Dalhousie University, Faculty of Medicine

<http://www.medicine.dal.ca/>

Laval University, Faculty of Medicine

<http://www.fmed.ulaval.ca/>

McGill University, Faculty of Medicine

<http://www.med.mcgill.ca/>

McMaster University, Faculty of Health Sciences

<http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/>

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Medicine

<http://www.med.mun.ca/>

Queen's University, Faculty of Medicine

<http://meds.queensu.ca/medicine/>

University of Alberta, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry  
<http://www.med.ualberta.ca/>

University of British Columbia, Faculty of Medicine \*  
<http://www.med.ubc.ca/>

University of Calgary, Faculty of Medicine  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/medicine/>

University of Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine  
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/>

University of Montreal, Faculty of Medicine  
<http://www.umontreal.ca>

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Medicine  
<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/med/>

University of Saskatchewan, College of Medicine \*  
<http://www.usask.ca/medicine/>

University of Sherbrooke, Faculty of Medicine \*  
<http://www.med.usherbrooke.ca/>

University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine  
<http://www.facmed.utoronto.ca/>

University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry \*  
<http://www.med.uwo.ca/>

### **Financial assistance and bursaries**

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:  
[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada\\_student\\_loan/index.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml)

### **Associations and other Links**

BC College of Family Physicians  
<http://www.bccfp.bc.ca/>

British Columbia Medical Association  
<http://www.bcma.org/>

Canadian Institute for Health Information  
<http://secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/splash.html>

Canadian Medical Association  
<http://www.cma.ca/>

Canadian Resident Matching Service  
<http://www.carms.ca/eng/index.shtml>

College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia  
<https://www.cpsbc.ca/node/147>

Health Match BC  
<http://www.healthmatchbc.org/>

Medical Council of Canada  
<http://mcc.ca>

Professional Association of Residents of British Columbia  
<http://www.par-bc.org/>

Society of General Practitioners of British Columbia  
<http://www.sgp.bc.ca/>

College of Family Physicians of Canada  
<http://www.cfpc.ca>

The College of Family Physicians of Canada: Primary Toolkit for Family Physicians  
<http://toolkit.cfpc.ca/en/index.php>