

Health Care Careers



Health Care Opportunities

Make a difference while enjoying many growth opportunities

The health care industry is unique in that the jobs boast numerous benefits both personally and professionally. You can make a huge difference in people's lives, participate in an extended learning curve with peers and continuing education, earn a quality wage and enjoy a career of varied opportunities.

RANGE OF JOBS

Health care offers a wide range of job opportunities, even for those who begin at entry level. You'll be working in an environment with highly educated experts and industry leaders, and that can open doors to previously unimagined new areas of work and expertise. You'll be encouraged to continue to pursue advanced career goals and higher education. This fast-paced setting also offers plenty of chances to network with others in your field of professional interest. They'll welcome your interest in different fields, and that could lead you into a new role. Cross-training is often a stalwart activity in local hospitals. Some institutions even help with costs when workers pursue new degree paths or updated certifications over the course of their medical career.

EXCITING BENEFITS

This economic sector continues to grow at such a fast



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pace that employers have to work harder than ever to recruit and retain the best workers. In fact, the industry is expected to add nearly 2 million new jobs through 2028, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's led to notable incentives including sponsored health insurance, extended vacation and more paid sick days. If you're considering a career in health care, or are just ready to move on from

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your current position, keep in mind that there may be exciting benefits to secure before signing on the dotted line. All of them make this career choice an even more inviting prospect.

SERVING OTHERS

The act of helping others in their time of need has always drawn people to health care. Workers at every level, from admissions to nurses and doctors to hospital administrators

play very important roles in helping the sick and injured live their very best lives. Admissions personnel might calm someone's nerves who is facing an uncertain medical outcome. Nurses take care of detailed work that makes the entire process move more smoothly. If the proper bond of trust is built along the way, everyone plays a critical role in a positive outcome. In some cases, doctors and patients even develop lifelong relationships.

Becoming a Dentist

There are several steps involved before you begin to treat patients

Dentistry is one of medicine's most highly regarded areas. In order to work in this exciting field, you'll have to earn a broad-based understanding of how to diagnose, prevent and treat oral issues.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The first step toward working as a dentist involves completing an undergraduate degree. Coursework will include classes in sciences like biology, while students participate in shadowing programs at local dental facilities in order to gain practical experience. The American Dental Association recommends attending dental conferences and joining pre-dental organizations to network and learn more about the course load and job.

APPLYING FOR SCHOOL

You'll need to pass the Dental Admission Test, which measures both scientific knowledge and academic ability over several sections — including qualitative reasoning and reading comprehension. Students prepare through reviews of relevant material and practice tests. Dental schools generally require applicants to provide complete transcripts, recommendation letters and a state-



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ment of intent. Experts recommend applying to multiple schools, since there may be small variances in the programs that make some more attractive than others. These degree programs generally span a four-year period, with two years of classroom and lab experiences and two more focusing on clinical work with licensed professionals.

GETTING LICENSED

Dentists must be licensed

to practice in their specific location after graduating from school. A written test and clinical exam are usually involved, but requirements tend to vary based on the city, state or country. Dentists are sometimes also required to complete a residency in order to obtain more training in specialized areas, the American Dental Association notes. These postgraduate programs may focus on orthodontics, endodontics,

periodontics, oral surgery or pediatric dentistry, among other specialties. This additional training is often paired with a separate required board certification, according to the ADA.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Making a difference in people's lives through dentistry requires a lot of work in advance, but learning doesn't stop once you've obtained a

degree and proper certification. Training is an ongoing process in dentistry, just as in other health care professions, because of continuous advancements in technology and procedures. Dentists attend conferences, read and write for professional journals and take additional courses in order to remain up to date. Working as a dentist involves a lifetime of investment, but the rewards can last just as long.

Pathways Into Nursing

This thriving career path has grown far beyond the traditional role of RN

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects the number of registered nursing jobs to grow by some 372,000 through the decade ending in 2028, a 12% increase. But the need for nurses in our modern health care industry stretches far beyond this traditional role. In fact, there are many, many other job opportunities in nursing that can provide a fulfilling career path — and some of them don't require the same time and expense.

LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE

Licensed practical nurses work alongside others to encourage adherence to a patient's previously developed care plan. Once hired, LPNs must consult with doctors and registered nurses, understand the patient's history and maintain critical documentation. They'll monitor vital signs and general health conditions, while acting as assistants for any needed medical procedures and regular testing regimens. These jobs ultimately provide a backbone for health care at hospitals, but also play a critical health care role in physicians' offices and nursing homes, among others. The need for LPNs is expected to grow by some 11% through



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2026, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and this degree doesn't take as long to secure as an RN. In fact, it can be earned within a single year.

INTENSIVE CARE UNIT NURSES

Registered nurses may also elect to focus on critical care, in order to become an ICU nurse. Patients often arrive in

a life or death situation, so these specialists must be able to quickly assess conditions, consistently and accurately monitor care, and act as a liaison with the patient's family when discussing their condition. It typically takes at least two years of clinical-level work before someone is certified as a critical-care registered nurse. Once licensed, nurses take on an entry-level

role for on-site training at an intensive care unit and then work their way up.

HOME HEALTH NURSES

Home-health nursing is a career with multi-level openings for registered nurses as well as licensed vocational nurses, assistants and others. These specialty caregivers travel to patients' homes in

order to provide needed evaluation, medical management and consultations, then return to a regular facility to report and document the various interactions and treatments. Registered nurses may perform physicals, administer medications, assist with mobility and develop care plans with the patient's doctor. Others will help with everyday care.

Navigating Social Media

The internet offers us a chance to connect, but there are risks too

Those looking for work in the medical field are often encouraged to carefully curate their online presence. Social media gives us an opportunity to connect with potential employers, stakeholders who can further our education, and patients both current and new. But there are also risks involved with any internet post.

TRUST AND COMPASSION

Two of the key elements of health care jobs are trust and compassion, as those seeking assistance often interact with medical personnel when at their most worried and unguarded. The profession recognizes this vulnerability by instituting and enforcing ethics codes and laws to protect patient privacy, but it's a good idea to go above and beyond those simple rules. Be careful when discussing past experiences or personal anecdotes so that the identity of people involved is shielded from the public.

A BETTER NETWORK

A stronger professional network can help you move up in your field, open doors for new jobs and deepen your understanding of potentially life-saving measures for the next patient. Engage in discussions within your area of expertise,



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post studies and stories to spark relevant conversations and follow experts and key leaders to learn more about the latest research. You'll develop a deeper understanding of the work you do, while potentially making contact with someone who can help your career along.

JOINING THE CONVERSATION

Social media makes it easier

than ever to engage a large audience, so take an opportunity to promote wellness and smart health care initiatives. The best job candidates — and the best community members — stimulate deeper thoughts about the world around them with relatable commentary that motivates and inspires. If you're struggling with how to get started, or just want to improve the look and feel of

your online presence ahead of applying for a new job, consider hiring or consulting with a professional social media manager.

STAYING ON TRACK

Make sure that all posts have been properly vetted to avoid spreading medical misinformation, a growing problem these days. You could be damaging your reputation with

potential employers, your peers and those who look to you for guidance. Be mindful of how the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (or HIPPA) impacts what you say and share about patients and their health care. Those who carelessly share sensitive information can be subject to significant penalties, including fines, the loss of their license or even prison.

Imaging Techs Play Vital Role

X-rays are both routine medical procedures and essential to health care

The people who take X-rays may be known as radiologic technicians, X-ray techs or radiographers. Whatever they're called, these jobs are among the fastest growing and most wanted industrywide.

WHAT THEY DO

X-rays have become so routine that many people overlook how essential they are in any physical exam. These images assist doctors and nurses in the clear examination of bones, organs, tissues and the circulation system. Technicians must handle imaging precisely and efficiently on sophisticated machines and then pay close attention to the detailed results provided through this process. Typically employed by the hospitals themselves, X-ray techs consult with doctors after the images are processed in order to make the proper diagnosis. They are also responsible for protecting patients, themselves and others from the potentially harmful rays which are emitted by the machines.

SPECIALTY FIELDS

Technicians may find themselves involved with a number of specialties within the field, including mammography, magnetic resonance imaging, computed tomography, radia-



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tion therapy, nuclear medicine or sonography. These focus areas offer a broad range of job opportunities, while also creating increased earning potential — in particular for those who expand their knowledge base into more than one specialty.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Whatever area you choose, technicians must have a deep working knowledge of anat-

omy, radiography and pathology. Requirements for education and licensure vary depending on where you live, but most radiologic techs must obtain a degree — either a bachelor's or a two-year degree. The coursework is typically a blend of classroom work and practice study hours, with additional on-site training. Students learn about radiation techniques, pathology, producing images, evaluating images and patient care.

Advanced study paths and associated certificates can include MRIs, mammography and CT scans, and these typically open the door for great potential employment opportunities. X-ray techs must also be able to maintain a good working relationship with patients, inspiring confidence and comfort in those who may be nervous about the scheduled procedure. Interpersonal skills and a good “bedside manner” are both critical

to success.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Technicians are accredited after graduation by the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technologists, and in some cases this is required. The majority of techs work in hospitals, though others may be found in private imaging centers, private health care facilities or specialty medical operations.

Animal Health Care

To the surprise of some, this field isn't limited to domestic pets

Those interested in working as an animal health care professional can certainly follow the traditional path of working at a vet's office — but it's not required. In fact, these hardy experts can strike out into a vast array of environments, from zoos and museums to aquariums and the great outdoors. Here are some of the fastest-growing, most interesting fields:

ZOO TECHNICIAN

These technicians work with zoo veterinarians to evaluate and provide health care to the facility's many species. That might include taking samples, performing injections, lab testing and surgical site preparation. Those who are interested should begin by completing the usual veterinarian technician coursework, which typically involves a two-year degree program. Some local governing boards or state governments may also require that potential hires pass the Veterinary Technician National Exam.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Wildlife rehabilitators evaluate abandoned or wounded species, sometimes in their native habitats. If needed, they then provide needed care until animals are healthy



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enough to be released again into the wild. They'll coordinate any needed treatment, deciding whether care can be administered personally or if a veterinarian is required. Exceptional ability to manage wounds is required, along with extensive knowledge about nutritional needs for a wide variety of species, as well as protocols involving capture and restraint.

This is an up-and-coming

field for those with an interest. They are especially needed during periods of wider distress involving natural disasters when animals and pets are injured or lost on a mass scale. Wildlife rehabilitators can be a sought-after position with humane societies, nonprofits and government agencies. In some cases, these rehabilitators may already serve as full-time veterinarians, biologists or zoolo-

gists. Government licensing is generally required.

ANIMAL BEHAVIORIST

People involved with this specialty essentially serve as a psychologist — only their focus is on animals, instead of people. They're tasked with studying animal interactions, both within their environments and with one another. Their analysis forms the basis

for planning animal returns to the wild, or when evaluating how animals will interact with one another. Animal behaviorists are also employed when trying to determine whether abandoned or lost pets are suitable for adoption or should be further trained. They are typically employed at zoos, museums and aquariums or through the offices of conservation groups.

Associate Degree Opportunities

You don't have to go to a four-year college in order to lend a hand

Associate degrees offer opportunities to assist your neighbors without the time and expense of university coursework or medical school. In fact, the cost of these two-year programs is substantially less than traditional degree paths, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. This leads to much lower student debt, or sometimes none at all. Once hired, the jobs linked to these degree paths often offer substantial salary bases, as well. Here's a look at some of the most promising career paths that require only an associate degree:

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a seven-percent growth in this field through 2029. Specialized respiratory therapists can be found in many health care facilities, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes and sleep clinics. They're expected to have a deep well of knowledge about our body's respiratory system, and stand ready to treat any breathing-related problems that end up impacting the lungs.

Principal everyday duties include intubation, in which patients are fitted with breath-



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ing tubes, and monitoring both breathing on a ventilator and key vital signs.

Respiratory therapists administer medications, typically through inhalers. They also consult with doctors when patients are diagnosed with lung-related illnesses, offering insight based on their history of regular monitoring.

RADIATION THERAPIST

Radiation therapy is a full-

time position that's typically funded through hospitals, with a projected growth of seven percent through 2029. Others may be employed at outpatient centers and physicians' offices. They operate sophisticated machines to deliver treatment, including linear accelerators, in order to treat those who have been diagnosed with certain cancers. The process promotes the elimination or shrinkage

of cancerous tumors.

MEDICAL SONOGRAPHER

This field is projected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to grow even faster, at a 12% rate through 2029. Professional medical sonographers use sound waves and special imaging equipment to create internal images of a body. They're typically referred to as ultrasounds,

and serve as a critical tool in diagnosing a wide variety of medical conditions. Sonographers must be adept at operating the specialized equipment, then review these images for quality and clarity, and identify abnormal results. Their analysis will also take into account medical history when preparing a report. Sonographers will also help explain if there is a need for additional procedures.