

SALUTE TO Nurses



Path To Nursing

Becoming a nurse is a rigorous process. It involves several years of education and passing a state board exam. One of many upsides is that demand for nurses is high and continues to grow.

There are many different levels of nursing, and each has a different education requirement, so it is important to decide what kind of nurse you want to be. The different levels of nursing include registered nurse, nurse practitioner, licensed practical nurse and certified nursing assistant. Registered nurses and nurse practitioners require considerably more education than RNs and nurse practitioners. Here are some steps to becoming a nurse:

GET AN EDUCATION

Most nursing jobs will require some sort of college degree. Entry-level positions for certified nursing assistants are sometimes available through on-the-job training, but anything beyond that will require an associate degree or higher. Becoming a nurse practitioner requires a master's degree.

A nursing degree will consist of clinical sessions and online/on-campus classes that show you how to work as a nurse. You will learn about medical terminology, patient care, medical equipment and much more. You may attend a community college or traditional university, depending on how far you need to go



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with your education.

GET CERTIFIED

Once you complete your career-training program, you will need to take an exam to get certified in your profession. If you are trained to be a

nursing assistant, you would soon become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). If you train to become a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse, you also will need to be certified. With all your credentials in place, you can

begin looking for a job.

CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION

Your basic nursing degree may not be enough to sustain your career as a nurse. Nursing is the kind of profes-

sion that requires lifelong learning. Continuing to go to school and taking specialized classes can help you stay up to date on advances in the medical field and keep you competitive in the marketplace.

Outside the Hospital

Working as a nurse doesn't always mean working long overnight shifts at a hospital. Nursing is attractive because of the endless job opportunities available in many settings.

Experienced nurses often seek jobs outside the hospital setting when they want a change of pace.

Most non-hospital nursing job opportunities require only a few years of clinical experience, and in some cases, additional education.

Here are 10 non-hospital nursing jobs for nurses, as suggested by the publication *Nurse Journal*:

Nurse health coach: A registered nurse without additional certifications has the option of referring to herself a “nurse coach” while staying within her scope of practice when coaching patients. This enables nurses to legally start their own business and coach others in their area of expertise. Also, many insurance companies hire nurses as health coaches in an effort to keep their customers as healthy as possible.

Life care planner: This is another potential business opportunity for a registered nurse. A life care planner helps terminally ill or long-term medically needy patients with their plan of care. In order to become certified, previous experience is required.

Nurse navigator: This job is ideal for nurses who understand insurance policies and can help patients obtain the care they need. It is a great fit for nurses who enjoy paperwork and research in addition to helping their patients.

Academic nurse writer: If you have a graduate degree in nursing and excel at writing, you can author textbook chapters in your specialty or obtain a publisher to write your own book. This is closely aligned

with nurse education.

Legal nurse consultant: Attorneys hire legal nurse consultants to help interpret medical records and serve as expert witnesses. This business opportunity requires training and certification.

Hospice nurse: Hospice nurses work for medical organizations and spend much of their time caring for patients at the end of their life in a home setting. They assist patients with pain relief and independent skills. They also provide medical and emotional support for family members.

Public health nurse: Public health nurses usually are employed by state, public or government entities and focus on the health of the community at large. They may work in settings such as schools, community organizations and health clinics.

Concierge nurse: If you are business minded, being a nurse who makes house calls may be the business opportunity for you. This is historically how most nurses practiced until the 1940s. It is an area with huge growth potential. When you start any nurse business, be sure and consult your state board of nursing, obtain the proper business and nurse liability insurance and consult the required experts, such as attorneys and tax/accounting professionals.

Forensic nurse consultant: Forensic nurse consultants work for law enforcement agencies and criminal attorneys in this role, especially if you can leverage your previous hospital experience. There are certifications that nurses will be expected to obtain in order to work in these roles.



Nursing School

There are many factors to consider when choosing a nursing school. Find a program that matches your career endeavors and personal needs.

Do you want to start out as a licensed practical nurse or a registered nurse?

This is just one of several questions you need to ask yourself before laying out a lot of cash for tuition.

Here are some important considerations for choosing your nursing school as suggested by the website nursingexplorer.org:

LOCATION

Are there nursing schools available near your home? How far can you travel to attend classes? Do you want to live on campus or commute? Do you want to relocate or live somewhere else during school time? There are several nursing schools in each state. Some nursing schools have long waiting lists to get into the program, so if you can broaden your range of acceptable schools, you may get started quicker. Is your degree choice available online, and is that an option for you? Online options could work well if you have a full-time job or a family. One important question to ask about these programs is how the clinical training is handled. Some may have clinical sites you must attend; others may allow you to complete the clinical practice near your location.

ACCREDITATION

You should choose a school accredited by the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. Understand there is a difference between approval by the state



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board of nursing and accreditation by a national accrediting organization.

Accreditation means the school's program has been reviewed and approved by experts in the field. This is one way to know that the school pre-

pares you well for your career. It means that the education given by these schools meets a minimum level of quality set by experts. Most nursing schools are accredited, but there still may be a few out there that are not. If

you do not receive your education from an accredited school, you will not be qualified to attend an accredited nursing school in the future if you choose to pursue higher degrees. If you need financial aid, you will need to choose an accredited school. Employers who are in the know about education prefer to hire nurses from accredited schools because the school uses nationally established standards for the its curriculum.

CLASS SCHEDULES

Does the school have classes scheduled that are convenient for you? Nursing clinicals are your hands-on practice time with patients. They get you ready for the patient-caregiver relationship. You will work side by side with real nurses so you can get a feel for what they do every day. Many students worry they will make a mistake during this time, but the instructors and nurses will monitor your work very closely. Find out which clinical sites are used by the school and how far they are from your home. Do these clinical sites have a good reputation? How much clinical time is available at the school? Will you get enough experience to be prepared when you go out into the workforce?

NCLEX EXAM PASS RATE

NCLEX is a national exam nurses are required to take in order to become licensed. This pass rate will give you a good idea of how well the school is preparing students. If the passing rate is low, steer clear. Look back at least five years worth of data.

National Nurses Week

National Nurses Week is celebrated during the second week of May. It is a time to salute the millions of men and women who serve tens of millions of patients at schools, companies, clinics and the military, among many places.

Here are a few ways to celebrate National Nurses Week:

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Invite a politician — local, state or federal — to accompany one or more nurses while on the job. Health care remains an important issue to voters. Politicians should be visible and accountable for their positions on health care. This offers good media coverage potential.

- Arrange a “town hall” meeting on nurses’ concerns, such as adequate staffing and quality of care.

- Request a proclamation from your mayor declaring May 6 National RN Recognition Day or May 6-12 as National Nurses Week.

- Hold a special celebration or reception to recognize one or more nurses in your community for heroic acts, years of service to the community, exemplary courage or commitment to the profession.

- Promote a positive, realistic image of RNs by sponsoring health fairs, conducting preventive screenings in underserved areas or organizing a walk-a-thon.

- Sponsor a community-wide event, such as a coloring or poem-writing contest for students. The children could acknowledge their favor-

ite nurse, a famous nurse, or family member who is a nurse. The drawings or poems could be displayed in local schools, hospitals and nursing homes.

- Invite a local celebrity who has spoken about health care, either as a patient or as a family member who has been a patient, and request sponsor-

ship of National RN Recognition Day and/or National Nurses Week. Hold an event and ask the celebrity to speak about a personal experience involving a nurse.

- Host a fund-raiser, such as a walk-a-thon, and donate money to a local charity. Emphasize the importance of

RNs in the nation’s health care system; pay tribute to a local nurse; or recognize all RNs who provide care all day, year-round.

- Organize a candlelight vigil on National RN Recognition Day (May 6) in honor of the hard work and commitment of the 3.1 million RNs in

America.

- Obtain support from other nursing and health care organizations in your area by asking them to sponsor National RN Recognition Day and/or National Nurses Week and to hold a joint event with your organization.

MEDIA OUTREACH

- Write and distribute a press release announcing National RN Recognition Day or National Nurses Week.

- Place an article in your state or local newspaper or a community blog about National Nurses Week and the contributions of nurses. Host a press conference. Discuss an important health care issue in your community; honor a registered nurse for a heroic act; or bestow an “honorary” nurse title to a deserving politician or civic leader.

- Host an editorial board meeting with leading state or local newspapers. Discuss the importance of RNs at the bedside and the nursing profession’s concerns about current issues, specifically those related to quality of care and health care innovation.

- Suggest that your state or local newspaper solicit stories from readers who would like to pay tribute to a nurse who provided exemplary care.



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Finding A Job

After several years of hard work in the classroom, it's time to step into the real world. Demand for nurses is high, but you still need a strategy for finding your first job as a nurse. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Be flexible, but have some goal ideas as well. Just like a diet or exercise plan, it's a lot easier to get things accomplished when you have specific goals. Do you like working with older patients or children? Do you like the routine, or would you rather work with more acute and sick populations?

DESIRED QUALITIES

Hiring managers are not looking for new grads with 4.0 GPAs and who were the president of their school and NSNA.

They are looking for someone who is positive, a professional, and most importantly, can easily integrate into their team.

A nurse should be honest about her strengths and weaknesses as a new nurse, be accountable for their actions and genuinely have a strong desire to learn much more everyday than they were taught in nursing school, to build their nursing foundation, and be genuinely compassionate, with a desire to ease the suffering of their patients, and help better their lives and health.

THE COVER LETTER

Put effort and thought into it and don't make it too generic. Don't believe people who tell you not to waste your time



writing a cover letter. You need to write a cover letter. Have a great resume. Make it different, somehow but not with hot

pink paper or a wild font.

NETWORKING

Look for networking oppor-

tunities everywhere you go.

Use your nursing school contacts to help you get a job. While you may have to wait

until you're licensed to formally apply, you do not have to wait to make connections, so start early.

How to Thank a Nurse

Nurses are a crucial part of the health care system. At hospitals, they do most of the heavy lifting. They clean patients, monitor their vitals, give them their medications, work long hours and so much more.

So how can you show your appreciation for these men and women?

Here are a few ways to thank your favorite nurse.

Write a letter. Sure, a Facebook message is definitely easier, but nothing beats a handwritten letter. For those who aren't good with words, buy a card.

Send flowers. Spring has sprung and flowers are abundant in most states this time of year. Show your nurse you care with a bouquet of flowers. Have them sent to his or her department.

Coffee, coffee and more coffee. Most nurses work long, grueling hours, and there's nothing better than a little caffeine boost. If you don't know the type of coffee the person likes, get a gift card.

Buy a bottle of wine. Nurses like to kick back and relax, too! Now all you need to do is find out if he likes a bottle of red or a bottle of white.

Bake a treat. Cookies, cupcakes and brownies are a sweet and personal way to show appreciation.

Buy a picture frame. A picture frame is something that's cost effective and will last. Sweeten the deal by adding a picture of your favorite nurse with a patient.



10 Notable Nurses

Everyone can name a famous doctor (think David Livingstone, Christiaan Barnard, Ben Carson or Hippocrates). And everyone can name a famous lawyer (Clarence Darrow, Thurgood Marshall or Johnny Cochran). But how many famous nurses can you name (besides Florence Nightingale)?

Here are some of history's most famous nurses:

Dorothea Dix: Dix championed legislation that led to the founding of the nation's first mental asylum. She ultimately founded 32 institutions that catered to the needs of the mentally ill.

Mary Todd Lincoln: As first lady of the United States during the Civil War, Mrs. Lincoln spent a lot of time in military hospitals tending to the needs of wounded Union troops.

Walt Whitman: One of the nation's most celebrated men of letters worked as a nurse. Who knew! During the Civil War, Whitman worked as a nurse for three years, helping take care of Union troops, telling them stories and helping write letters to their families.

Clara Barton: She is best known as the founder of the American Red Cross, but during the Civil War, she risked her life to help wounded soldiers and lobbied to have medical supplies brought to the battlefield.

Mary Eliza Mahoney: Mahoney was the first black woman to complete nursing training in the United States and become a registered nurse. She

later founded the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses.

Lillian Wald: An activist for better health conditions for the poor, Wald and a coworker became America's first public health nurses in the early 1900s.

Margaret Sanger: Sanger was a controversial figure in her day. She was an advocate of sexual education and birth control and founded what is now known as Planned Parenthood.

Mary Breckinridge: Breckinridge is credited with introducing the skill of midwifery to the United States. Her interest in healthcare was sparked by the death of her two young children.

Florence Guinness Blake: Blake was renowned for her advocacy for better training and education for nurses and elevating patient care to a professional level. She also raised the level of pediatric care.

Florence Nightingale: The most famous nurse of all time made a name for herself during the Crimean War by publicizing the poor conditions under which wounded British soldiers were being treated.

