Nurse

At a Glance

Nurses assist doctors and care for patients in hospitals and other health care settings.

Search by Cluster

Medical & Health

Earnings

Typical Earnings Range: 40K - 90K

Level of Education

- Community College or Technical Training
- University

Core Tasks

- Perform physical exams and collect patient information
- Provide medical treatment to patients, such as bandaging wounds or giving medication
- Monitor results of treatments
- Keep patients informed
- Maintain records and charts, and supervise other nurses and health support staff

Attributes & Abilities

- Concern for people’s well-being
- Able to calm people who are scared or in pain
- Communication skills
- Able to accept responsibility and supervise others
- Decisive

Workplace

- Employed in hospitals, nursing homes, walk-in clinics, prisons, schools, and other medical settings
- The work can be physically and emotionally demanding
- Potential hazards include contact with patients who have infectious diseases
- Most work 35 to 45 hours a week
- Some work shifts, including evenings and weekends

Job Description

Registered nurses, also known as RNs, are the most well-known of the various types of nursing professionals. They require more education than practical nurses and usually take on a wider range of responsibilities.

Many registered nurses are involved in providing direct patient care. However, their work might also include a variety of other duties. For example, they may present health information to large groups of people, perform urgent procedures in an emergency department, manage and instruct 100 other nurses in a large teaching hospital, or teach and do research at a university.

Their work with patients can be divided into four general duties. First, they assess patients’ physical, mental, and emotional health status. This involves collecting information on patients’ personal, family, and community background; taking blood pressure, temperature, and other vital signs; and performing basic physical exams.
Next, nurses help design and carry out treatment plans for patients. This could mean bandaging a wound, giving medications or injections, coordinating treatments with other health care professionals, or referring a patient to another caregiver.

Third, nurses monitor the results of treatments to see if the medical problem has been taken care of and to make sure that the patient is satisfied. Finally, nurses keep patients and their families informed about their medical options and educate them about health issues like nutrition, personal hygiene, and lifestyle choices.

Nurses also maintain records, such as patients’ charts, and supervise practical nurses and other health support staff.

Nurses have many options. They can choose to specialize in certain areas, such as surgery (assisting in the operating room), pediatrics (working with children), critical care (working in the intensive care unit), psychiatric nursing (working with the mentally ill), or geriatrics (working with older people). Nurses can work with individuals, families, or communities.

**Working Conditions**

Nurses work in hospitals, nursing homes, walk-in clinics, prisons, schools, and many other places.

Nursing requires a lot of physical activity. There is a great deal of standing, bending, and lifting. It can be emotionally demanding as well, especially if you are working with severely ill or dying patients. Of course, it can also be a tremendously rewarding profession.

Occupational hazards for nurses are similar to those of other health workers. They include contact with patients who have infectious diseases such as hepatitis and tuberculosis, and injury from instruments, chemicals, and gases.

Most full-time nurses work between 35 and 45 hours a week. However, schedules vary, and the hours can be irregular. Those who work in hospitals or nursing homes may work 12-hour shifts, including nights or weekends. Others, such as those in community centres, may have more regular schedules.

Some nurses work on a casual or temporary basis which means that they do not have regularly scheduled work periods, and they may work in many different hospitals or clinics. Usually, casual workers are called when an employer needs extra help, or when a regular staff member is away. They may work for a week or a month at a time.

**Earnings**

Earnings for registered nurses vary with education level, experience, and type of workplace. In general, nurses who work full-time can earn anywhere from about $40,000 to $90,000 a year. Those with additional training, or who work as managers or administrators, generally earn the highest salaries.

Nurses can make even more by doing overtime work. They also receive pay for being on-call, which means they are ready to go to work on a moment’s notice if needed.

Nurses who do part-time or casual work are paid by the hour, and the amount they make in a year depends on the number of hours they work.

Full-time nurses generally receive benefits such as dental coverage, paid vacations, and paid sick days. Part-time nurses often receive benefits as well; nurses who do casual work usually do not.

People in this profession are often represented by nurses’ unions. This means that their salary rates and benefits are negotiated on their behalf by union representatives.

**Education**
To become a registered nurse, you must earn a high school diploma, then complete a post-secondary nursing program. Entrance requirements for nursing programs differ depending on the college or university. Generally, you should graduate from high school with senior level science, math, and English courses. Be sure to contact the nursing school you are planning to attend to find out what their admission requirements are.

All provinces except Quebec require nursing students to earn a bachelor’s degree in nursing. However, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) recommends that all nursing students obtain a bachelor’s degree, regardless of provincial requirements.

Nursing degrees are offered at both universities and colleges and are called either bachelor’s degrees in nursing (BN) or Bachelor of Science in nursing degrees (BScN). These programs are usually 4 years in length, though shorter programs are also available for students who have previously earned a degree in another subject. Nursing programs include both classroom instruction and on-the-job training in a medical setting.

Once you have obtained your degree, you must pass an exam administered by your provincial nursing association to become a registered nurse.

**Related College & University Programs**

- Nursing
- Nursing - Post RN
- Nursing Refresher
- Nursing Administration and Leadership
- Pediatric Nursing
- Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing
- Community Nursing
- Operating Room Nursing
- Critical Care Nursing
- Emergency Nursing
- Gerontological Nursing
- Nephrology Nursing
- Occupational Health Nursing
- Cardiac Nursing
- Oncological Nursing

**Other Suggested Qualifications**

Nurses should be caring and sympathetic. They need to be strong communicators, with good people skills. Patients may be nervous or in pain, and the ability to calm them is important. Nurses must also be able to accept responsibility, supervise others, follow procedures precisely, and determine when consultation is required. Volunteering at a hospital or clinic may help you decide if nursing is for you. If you are interested in continuing your education, master’s and PhD programs in nursing are available at many universities. In addition, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) offers specialty certification in a number of areas, including gerontology, critical care, and rehabilitation. See the link to the CNA in the Other Resources section for more information.

**Suggested High School Subjects**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>Personal &amp; Career Development</td>
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<td>Computers</td>
<td>Computers</td>
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<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Health &amp; Physical Education</td>
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<td>Health &amp; Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
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Important

- Check with your advisor to make sure that your course selections satisfy your graduation requirements.
- Courses available may vary from school to school.

Sample Career Path

People take different pathways through their careers, but no one starts at the top. This is an example of how the earnings, education and experience requirements, and responsibilities might progress for someone in this occupation.

Level 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Title</th>
<th>Registered Nurse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>$40,000 to $70,000 a year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in nursing (a diploma is acceptable in Quebec)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Successful completion of the nursing exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Providing general patient care; giving treatments and medications; performing some administrative duties.</td>
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Level 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Title</th>
<th>Head Nurse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>$55,000 to $80,000 a year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Several years of nursing experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possibly a master’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Providing general patient care; giving treatments and medications; arranging work schedules; assigning nursing duties; performing other administrative duties for a specific ward, floor, or unit.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Level 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Title</th>
<th>Educator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>$70,000 to $90,000 a year or more</td>
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</table>
Requirements

• Preferably a master's degree

Responsibilities

Educating nursing students and staff members; conducting research; providing some patient care.

Related Careers

Here are some other occupations that you might be interested in. Click on an occupation name to learn more.

- Bioethicist
- Cardiovascular Tech
- Coroner
- Dental Hygienist
- Diagnostic Medical Sonographer
- Doctor
- Electroneurodiagnostic Tech
- Massage Therapist
- Medical Imaging Tech
- Medical Secretary
- Mental Health Nurse
- Midwife
- Nuclear Medicine Technologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Occupational Therapist
- Paramedic
- Perfusionist
- Phlebotomist
- Physiotherapist
- Practical Nurse
- Psychiatric Aide
- Public Health Nurse
- Radiologist
- Recreation Therapist
- Respiratory Therapist

Career Clusters

Career Clusters are groups or families of occupations that share common characteristics such as knowledge requirements, skill sets, and/or goals.

Medical & Health

National Occupational Classification

NOC Code: 3012

Other Resources

Canadian Nurses Association (CNA)
http://www.cna-aic.ca
CNA promotes the nursing profession in Canada. Click Becoming An RN to find out more about registered nurses and how to pursue this career.

Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing
http://www.casn.ca
This website lists accredit nursing programs across the country. The Education section offers helpful information for anyone interested in becoming a nurse.
Canadian Nursing Students’ Association (CNSA)
http://www.cnsa.ca
This association represents nursing students from across the country. Click on Publications and then on Why Nursing? to learn more about this career, or check out the Links section to find other helpful nursing websites.

NurseCareerTips.Com (US)
http://www.nursecareertips.com
Here you can find lots of great information and advice for those interested in pursuing a nursing career, including benefits and disadvantages of nursing, school programs, and degrees.

Nursing Link – Become A Nurse (US)
http://www.nursinglink.monster.com/education
This website offers helpful articles and advice for anyone interested in this career.

Atlantic – Top Qualities of Great Nurses (US)
Discover the qualities needed to be a great nurse.

Yahoo! Voices – Five Qualities of a Good Nurse (US)
http://www.voices.yahoo.com/five-qualities-good-nurse-4944744.html
This article lists some important qualities of a nurse. Learn about them here!

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada - Essential Skills
Registered Nurses

Ontario Skills Passport
Registered Nurses
http://www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/DisplayNocDetails.xhtml?nocid=3152