



Respiratory Therapist Overview

The Field - Preparation - Day in the Life - Earnings - Employment - Career Path Forecast - Professional Organizations

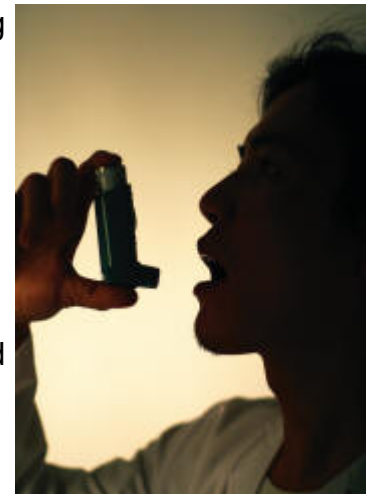
The Field

Respiratory therapists and respiratory therapy technicians -- also known as respiratory care practitioners -- evaluate, treat, and care for patients with breathing or other cardiopulmonary disorders. Practicing under the direction of a physician, respiratory therapists assume primary responsibility for all respiratory care therapeutic treatments and diagnostic procedures, including the supervision of respiratory therapy technicians. Respiratory therapy technicians follow specific, well-defined respiratory care procedures under the direction of respiratory therapists and physicians.



In clinical practice, many of the daily duties of therapists and technicians overlap. However, therapists generally have greater responsibility than technicians. For example, respiratory therapists consult with physicians and other health care staff to help develop and modify patient care plans. Respiratory therapists also are more likely to provide complex therapy requiring considerable independent judgment, such as caring for patients on life support in intensive-care units of hospitals. In this Handbook statement, the term respiratory therapist includes both respiratory therapists and respiratory therapy technicians.

Respiratory therapists evaluate and treat all types of patients, ranging from premature infants whose lungs are not fully developed to elderly people whose lungs are diseased. Respiratory therapists provide temporary relief to patients with chronic asthma or emphysema, and they give emergency care to patients who are victims of a heart attack, stroke, drowning, or shock.



To evaluate patients, respiratory therapists interview them, perform limited physical examinations, and conduct diagnostic tests. For example, respiratory therapists test a patient's breathing capacity and determine the concentration of oxygen and other gases in a patient's blood. They also measure a patient's pH, which indicates the acidity or alkalinity of the blood. To evaluate a patient's lung capacity, respiratory therapists have the patient breathe into an instrument that measures the volume and flow of oxygen during inhalation and exhalation. By comparing the reading with the norm for the patient's age, height, weight, and sex, respiratory therapists can provide information that helps determine whether the patient has any lung deficiencies.

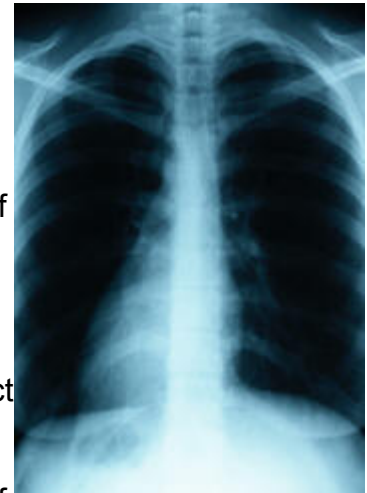
"Physical Therapist Overview"

Prepared as part of the Sloan Career Cornerstone Center (www.careercornerstone.org)

Note: Some resources in this section are provided by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To analyze oxygen, carbon dioxide, and blood pH levels, therapists draw an arterial blood sample, place it in a blood gas analyzer, and relay the results to a physician, who then makes treatment decisions.

To treat patients, respiratory therapists use oxygen or oxygen mixtures, chest physiotherapy, and aerosol medications -- liquid medications suspended in a gas that forms a mist which is inhaled. They teach patients how to inhale the aerosol properly to ensure its effectiveness. When a patient has difficulty getting enough oxygen into his or her blood, therapists increase the patient's concentration of oxygen by placing an oxygen mask or nasal cannula on the patient and setting the oxygen flow at the level prescribed by a physician. Therapists also connect patients who cannot breathe on their own to ventilators that deliver pressurized oxygen into the lungs. The therapists insert a tube into the patient's trachea, or windpipe; connect the tube to the ventilator; and set the rate, volume, and oxygen concentration of the oxygen mixture entering the patient's lungs. Therapists perform regular assessments of patients and equipment. If a patient appears to be having difficulty breathing or if the oxygen, carbon dioxide, or pH level of the blood is abnormal, therapists change the ventilator setting according to the doctor's orders or check the equipment for mechanical problems.



Respiratory therapists perform chest physiotherapy on patients to remove mucus from their lungs and make it easier for them to breathe. Therapists place patients in positions that help drain mucus, and then vibrate the patients' rib cages, often by tapping on the chest, and tell the patients to cough. Chest physiotherapy may be needed after surgery, for example, because anesthesia depresses respiration. As a result, physiotherapy may be prescribed to help get the patient's lungs back to normal and to prevent congestion. Chest physiotherapy also helps patients suffering from lung diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, that cause mucus to collect in the lungs.



Therapists who work in home care teach patients and their families to use ventilators and other life-support systems. In addition, these therapists visit patients in their homes to inspect and clean equipment, evaluate the home environment, and ensure that patients have sufficient knowledge of their diseases and the proper use of their medications and equipment. Therapists also make emergency visits if equipment problems arise. In some hospitals, therapists perform tasks that fall outside their traditional role. Therapists are becoming involved in areas such as pulmonary rehabilitation, smoking cessation counseling, disease prevention, case management, and polysomnography -- the diagnosis of breathing disorders during sleep, such as apnea. Respiratory therapists also increasingly treat critical care patients, either as part of surface and air transport teams or as part of rapid-response teams in hospitals.



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Preparation

An associate degree is the minimum educational requirement, but a bachelor's or master's degree may be important for advancement. All States, except Alaska and Hawaii, require respiratory therapists to be licensed.

Among the areas of study in respiratory therapy programs are human anatomy and physiology, pathophysiology, chemistry, physics, microbiology, pharmacology, and mathematics. Other courses deal with therapeutic and diagnostic procedures and tests, equipment, patient assessment, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the application of clinical practice guidelines, patient care outside of hospitals, cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, respiratory health promotion and disease prevention, and medical recordkeeping and reimbursement. High school students interested in applying to respiratory therapy programs should take courses in health, biology, mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Respiratory care involves basic mathematical problem solving and an understanding of chemical and physical principles. For example, respiratory care workers must be able to compute dosages of medication and calculate gas concentrations.



Therapists should be sensitive to a patient's physical and psychological needs. Respiratory care practitioners must pay attention to detail, follow instructions, and work as part of a team. In addition, operating advanced equipment requires proficiency with computers.

Respiratory therapists advance in clinical practice by moving from general care to the care of critically ill patients who have significant problems in other organ systems, such as the heart or kidneys. Respiratory therapists, especially those with a bachelor's or master's degree, also may advance to supervisory or managerial positions in a respiratory therapy department. Respiratory therapists in home health care and equipment rental firms may become branch managers. Some respiratory therapists advance by moving into teaching positions. Some others use the knowledge gained as a respiratory therapist to work in another industry, such as developing, marketing, or selling pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

► Licensure and Certification

A license is required to practice as a respiratory therapist, except in Alaska and Hawaii. Also, most employers require respiratory therapists to maintain a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification. Licensure is usually based, in large part, on meeting the requirements for certification from the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC). The board offers the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) credential to those who graduate from entry-level or advanced programs accredited by CAAHEP or the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) and who also pass an exam. The board also awards the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) to CRTs who have graduated from advanced programs and pass two separate examinations. Supervisory positions and intensive-care specialties usually require the RRT.



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► Accredited Programs

An associate degree is required to become a respiratory therapist. Training is offered at the postsecondary level by colleges and universities, medical schools, vocational-technical institutes, and the Armed Forces. Most programs award associate or bachelor's degree and prepare graduates for jobs as advanced respiratory therapists. A limited number of associate degree programs lead to jobs as entry-level respiratory therapists. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is the nationally recognized accrediting authority for respiratory therapist education accreditation. The following is a list of current accredited advanced respiratory therapy programs.

Accredited Advanced Respiratory Therapy Programs (Associate's and Bachelor's Degrees)	
<p>Alabama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shelton State Community College (Associate) ● University of Alabama at Birmingham (Baccalaureate) ● University of South Alabama (Baccalaureate) ● Wallace Community College (Associate) ● Wallace State Community College (Associate) <p>Arkansas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Northwest Arkansas Community College (Associate) ● University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences-Little Rock (Associate; Baccalaureate) ● University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences - Texarkana (Associate) <p>Arizona</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apollo College-Mesa (Associate) ● GateWay Community College (Associate) ● Kaplan College-Phoenix (Associate) ● Pima Community College-Tucson (Associate) ● Pima Medical Institute-Mesa (Associate) ● Pima Medical Institute-Tucson (Associate) <p>California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● American River College (Associate) ● Butte Glenn Community College (Associate) ● California College San Diego (Associate) ● ConCorde Career College-Garden Grove (Associate) ● ConCorde Career College-North Hollywood (Associate, Certificate) ● Concorde Career College-San Bernadino (Associate) ● Crafton Hills College (Associate) ● East Los Angeles College (Associate) ● Foothill College (Associate) ● Fresno City College (Associate) ● Grossmont College (Associate) 	<p>Mississippi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coahoma Community College (Associate) ● Copiah - Lincoln Community College (Associate) ● Hinds Community College - Raymond (Associate) ● Itawamba Community College (Associate) ● Meridian Community College (Associate) ● Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (Associate) ● Northeast Mississippi Community College (Associate) ● Northwest Mississippi Community College (Associate) ● Pearl River Community College (Associate) <p>Montana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Montana State University College of Tech (Associate) ● University of Montana (Associate) <p>North Carolina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carteret Community College (Associate) ● Catawba Valley Community College (Associate) ● Central Piedmont Community College (Associate) ● Durham Technical Community College (Associate) ● Edgecombe Community College (Associate) ● Fayetteville Technical Community College (Associate) ● Forsyth Technical Community College (Associate) ● Pitt Community College (Associate) ● Robeson Community College (Associate) ● Rockingham Community College (Associate) ● Sandhills Community College (Associate) ● Southwestern Community College-Sylva (Associate) ● Stanly Community College (Associate)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loma Linda University (Baccalaureate) ● Los Angeles Valley College (Associate) ● Maric College (Associate) ● Modesto Junior College (Associate) ● Mt San Antonio College (Associate) ● Napa Valley College (Associate) ● Ohlone College (Associate) ● Orange Coast College (Associate) ● Pima Medical Institute-Chula Vista (Associate) ● San Joaquin Valley College - Rancho Cucamonga (Associate) ● San Joaquin Valley College -Bakersfield (Associate) ● San Joaquin Valley College-Visalia (Associate) ● Skyline College (Associate) ● Victor Valley College (Associate) <p>Colorado</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pickens Technical College (Associate) ● Pima Medical Institute-Denver (Associate) ● Pueblo Community College (Associate) <p>Connecticut</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manchester Community College (Associate) ● Naugatuck Valley Community College (Associate) ● Norwalk Hospital/Norwalk Community Tech College (Associate) ● Quinnipiac University (Associate) ● University of Hartford (Certificate, Baccalaureate) <p>District of Columbia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of the District of Columbia (Associate) <p>Delaware</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delaware Tech and Community College - Owens Campus (Associate) ● Delaware Technical and Community College - Wilmington (Associate) <p>Florida</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ATI Health Education Centers (Associate) ● Broward Community College (Associate) ● Daytona Beach Community College (Associate) ● Edison College - Ft Myers (Associate) ● Florida A & M University (Baccalaureate) ● Florida Community College (Associate) ● Gulf Coast Community College (Associate) ● Hillsborough Community College (Associate) 	<p>North Dakota</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Dakota State University (Baccalaureate) ● St Alexius Medical Center/University of Mary (Associate) <p>Nebraska</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alegent Health (Baccalaureate) ● Metropolitan Community College - Omaha (Associate) ● Nebraska Methodist College (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Southeast Community College (Associate) <p>New Hampshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● River Valley Community College (Associate) <p>New Jersey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bergen Community College (Associate) ● Brookdale Community College (Associate) ● Northwest NJ Consortium Respiratory Care Education (Associate) ● University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey-North (Associate) ● University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Stratford (South) (Associate) <p>New Mexico</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central New Mexico Community College (Associate) ● Dona Ana Community College (Associate) ● Eastern New Mexico University (Associate) <p>Nevada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community College of Southern Nevada (Associate) ● Pima Medical Institute-Las Vegas (Associate) <p>New York</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College (Certificate, Associate) ● Erie Community College - North Campus (Associate) ● Genesee Community College (Associate) ● Hudson Valley Community College (Associate) ● Long Island University (Baccalaureate) ● Mohawk Valley Community College (Associate) ● Molloy College (Associate) ● Nassau Community College (Associate) ● Onondaga Community College (Associate) ● Stony Brook University (Baccalaureate) ● SUNY Upstate Medical University (Baccalaureate) ● Westchester Community College (Associate)
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- Indian River Community College (Associate)
- Miami-Dade College (Associate)
- Palm Beach Community College (Associate)
- Santa Fe Community College (Associate)
- Seminole Community College (Associate)
- St Petersburg College (Associate)
- Tallahassee Community College (Associate)
- University of Central Florida (Baccalaureate)
- Valencia Community College (Associate)

Georgia

- Armstrong Atlantic State University (Baccalaureate)
- Athens Technical College (Associate)
- Augusta Technical College (Associate)
- Coosa Valley Technical College (Associate)
- Darton College (Associate)
- Georgia State University (Baccalaureate)
- Griffin Technical College (Associate)
- Gwinnett Technical College (Associate)
- Heart of Georgia Technical College (Associate)
- Macon State College (Associate)
- Medical College of Georgia (Baccalaureate)
- Okefenokee Technical College (Associate)
- Southwest Georgia Technical College (Associate)

Hawaii

- Kapiolani Community College (Associate)

Iowa

- Des Moines Area Community College-Ankeny (Associate)
- Kirkwood Community College (Associate)
- Northeast Iowa Community College (Associate)
- Southeastern Community College (Associate)
- St. Luke's College (Associate)

Idaho

- Boise State University (Associate, Baccalaureate)

Illinois

- College of DuPage (Associate)
- Illinois Central College (Associate)
- Kankakee Community College (Associate)
- Kaskaskia College (Associate)
- Malcolm X College (Associate)
- Moraine Valley Community College (Associate)
- Olive-Harvey College (Associate)
- Parkland College (Associate)

Ohio

- Bowling Green State University (Associate)
- Cincinnati State Technical and Community College (Associate)
- Collins Career Center - Chesapeake (Associate)
- Columbus State Community College (Associate)
- Cuyahoga Community College (Associate)
- James A. Rhodes State College (Associate)
- Jefferson Community and Technical College (Associate)
- Kettering College of Medical Arts (Associate)
- Lakeland Community College (Associate)
- North Central State College (Associate)
- Ohio State University (Baccalaureate)
- Shawnee State University (Associate)
- Sinclair Community College (Associate)
- Stark State College of Technology (Associate)
- University of Akron (Associate)
- University of Toledo (Associate, Baccalaureate)
- Washington State Community College (Associate)
- Youngstown State University (Baccalaureate)

Oklahoma

- Francis Tuttle Vocational Technical Center (Associate)
- Northwest Oklahoma Respiratory Care Consortium (Associate)
- Rose State College (Associate)
- Tulsa Community College (Associate)

Oregon

- Lane Community College (Associate)
- www.lanecc.edu
- Mt Hood Community College (Associate)
 - Oregon Institute of Technology (Associate)

Pennsylvania

- Community College of Allegheny County-Allegheny Campus (Associate)
- Community College of Philadelphia (Associate)
- Delaware County Community College/Crozer-Chester Med Center (Associate)
- Gannon University (Associate, Baccalaureate)
- Gwynedd-Mercy College (Associate)
- Harrisburg Area Community College-Harrisburg Campus (Associate)
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Baccalaureate)
- Luzerne County Community College (Associate)
- Mansfield University (Associate)
- Millersville University of Pennsylvania

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rock Valley College (Associate) ● Southwestern Illinois College - Belleville (Associate) ● St. John's Hospital (Associate) ● Triton College (Associate) <p>Indiana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clarian Health Partners (Baccalaureate) ● Indiana University Northwest (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College, Central Indiana Region (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College-Ft. Wayne (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College-Lafayette (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College-Michigan City (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College-Sellersburg (Associate) ● Ivy Tech Community College-Terre Haute (Associate) ● University of Southern Indiana (Associate) <p>Kansas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bethany Medical Center / Kansas City Kansas Community College (Associate) ● Johnson County Community College (Associate) ● Labette Community College (Associate) ● Newman University (Associate) ● Seward County Community College (Associate) ● University of Kansas Medical Center (Baccalaureate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Washburn University (Associate) <p>Kentucky</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bellarmine University (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Big Sandy Community and Technical College (Associate) ● Bluegrass Community and Technical College (Associate) ● Bowling Green Technical College (Associate) ● Jefferson Community and Technical College - Louisville (Associate) ● Madisonville Community College (Associate) ● Maysville Community & Technical College - Morehead (Associate) ● Northern Kentucky University (Associate) ● Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical 	<p>(Baccalaureate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading Area Community College (Associate) ● Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology (Associate) ● University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown (Associate) ● West Chester University (Baccalaureate) ● Western School of Health and Business Careers-Pittsburgh (Associate) ● York College of Pennsylvania (Associate, Baccalaureate) <p>Rhode Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community College of Rhode Island (Associate) <p>South Carolina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Florence-Darlington Technical College (Associate) ● Greenville Technical College (Associate) ● Midlands Technical College (Associate) ● Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College (Associate) ● Piedmont Technical College (Associate) ● Spartanburg Community College (Associate) ● Tri-County Technical College (Associate) ● Trident Technical College (Associate) <p>South Dakota</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dakota State University (Associate, Baccalaureate) <p>Tennessee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baptist Memorial College of Health Science (Baccalaureate) ● Chattanooga State Technical Community College (Associate) ● Columbia State Community College (Associate) ● ConCorde Career College-Memphis (Associate, Certificate) ● East Tennessee State University (Baccalaureate) ● Jackson State Community College (Associate) ● Roane State Community College (Associate) ● Tennessee State University (Associate) ● Volunteer State Community College (Associate) <p>Texas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alvin Community College (Associate) ● Amarillo College (Associate) ● Angelina College (Associate) ● Collin County Community College District (Associate) ● Del Mar College (Associate)
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<p>College (Associate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● West Kentucky Community and Technical College (Associate) <p>Louisiana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bossier Parish Community College (Associate) ● Delgado Community College (Associate) ● Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (Baccalaureate) ● Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center - Shreveport (Baccalaureate) ● Nicholls State University (Associate, Certificate, Baccalaureate) ● Our Lady of Holy Cross/Alton Ochsner Medical Foundation (Associate) ● Southern University at Shreveport (Associate) <p>Massachusetts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Berkshire Community College (Associate) ● Massasoit Community College (Associate) ● North Shore Community College (Associate) ● Northeastern University (Baccalaureate) ● Northern Essex Community College (Associate) ● Quinsigamond Community College (Associate) ● Springfield Technical Community College (Associate) <p>Maryland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allegany College of Maryland (Associate) ● Baltimore City Community College (Associate) ● Columbia Union College (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Community College of Baltimore County - Essex Campus (Associate) ● Frederick Community College (Associate) ● Prince George's Community College (Associate) ● Salisbury University (Associate) <p>Maine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kennebec Valley Community College (Associate) ● Southern Maine Community College (Associate) <p>Michigan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charles Stewart Mott Community College (Associate) ● Delta College (Associate) ● Ferris State University (Associate) ● Henry Ford Community College (Associate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● El Centro College (Associate) ● El Paso Community College (Associate) ● Houston Community College System (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Howard College - San Angelo (Associate) ● Kingwood College - NHMCCD (Associate) ● Lamar Institute of Technology-Beaumont (Associate) ● McLennan Community College (Associate) ● Midland College (Associate) ● Midwestern State University (Baccalaureate) ● San Jacinto College (Associate) ● South Plains College (Associate) ● St Philip's College (Associate) ● Tarrant County College (Associate) ● Temple College (Associate) ● Texas Southern University (Associate) ● Texas State University-San Marcos (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Tyler Junior College (Associate) ● University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (Baccalaureate) ● University of Texas Medical Branch (Baccalaureate) ● University of Texas-Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (Associate) ● Victoria College (Associate) ● Weatherford College (Associate) <p>Utah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● California College for Health Sciences-Independence University (Associate) ● Stevens Henager College-Murray (Associate) ● Weber State University (Associate, Baccalaureate) <p>Virginia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Virginia Community College (Associate) ● J Sargeant Reynolds Community College (Associate) ● Jefferson College of Health Sciences (Associate) ● Mountain Empire Community College (Associate) ● Northern Virginia Community College (Certificate, Associate) ● Shenandoah University (Associate, Baccalaureate) ● Southwest Virginia Community College (Associate) ● Tidewater Community College (Associate)
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Day in the Life

Respiratory therapists generally work between 35 and 40 hours a week. Because hospitals operate around the clock, therapists may work evenings, nights, or weekends. They spend long periods standing and walking between patients' rooms. In an emergency, therapists work under the stress of the situation. Respiratory therapists employed in home health care must travel frequently to patients' homes. Respiratory therapists are trained to work with gases stored under pressure. Adherence to safety precautions and regular maintenance and testing of equipment minimize the risk of injury. As in many other health occupations, respiratory therapists are exposed to infectious diseases, but by carefully following proper procedures they can minimize the risks.

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Earnings

Median annual earnings of wage-and-salary respiratory therapists are about \$47,420. The middle 50 percent earned between \$40,840 and \$56,150. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$35,200, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$64,190.

Employment

Respiratory therapists hold about 122,000 jobs in the United States. About 79 percent of jobs were in hospitals, mainly in departments of respiratory care, anesthesiology, or pulmonary medicine. Most of the remaining jobs were in offices of physicians or other health practitioners, consumer-goods rental firms that supply respiratory equipment for home use, nursing care facilities, and home health care services. Holding a second job is relatively common for respiratory therapists. About 12 percent held another job, compared with 5 percent of workers in all occupations.

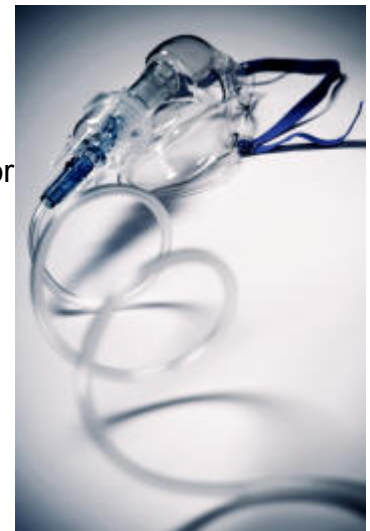
Career Path Forecast

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, faster-than-average employment growth is projected for respiratory therapists. Job opportunities should be very good, especially for respiratory therapists with cardiopulmonary care skills or experience working with infants.

Employment of respiratory therapists is expected to grow 19 percent from 2006 to 2016, faster than the average for all occupations. The increasing demand will come from substantial growth in the middle-aged and elderly population -- a development that will heighten the incidence of cardiopulmonary disease. Growth in demand also will result from the expanding role of respiratory therapists in case management, disease prevention, emergency care, and the early detection of pulmonary disorders.

Older Americans suffer most from respiratory ailments and cardiopulmonary diseases such as pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease. As their numbers increase, the need for respiratory therapists is expected to increase as well. In addition, advances in inhalable medications and in the treatment of lung transplant patients, heart attack and accident victims, and premature infants (many of whom are dependent on a ventilator during part of their treatment) will increase the demand for the services of respiratory care practitioners.

Job opportunities are expected to be very good. The vast majority of job openings will continue to be in hospitals. However, a growing number of openings are expected to be outside of hospitals, especially in home health care services, offices of physicians or other health practitioners, consumer-goods rental firms, or in the employment services industry as a temporary worker in various settings.



"Respiratory Therapist Overview"

Prepared as part of the Sloan Career Cornerstone Center (www.careercornerstone.org)

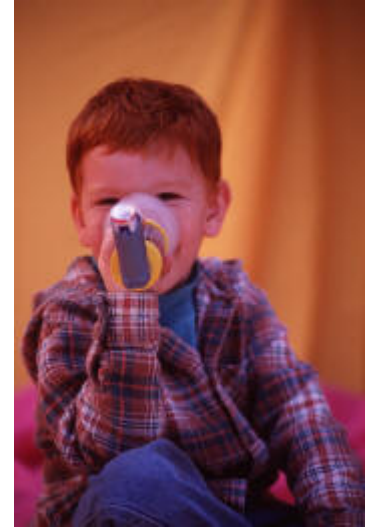
Note: Some resources in this section are provided by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Professional Organizations

Professional organizations and associations provide a wide range of resources for planning and navigating a career in respiratory therapy. These groups can play a key role in your development and keep you abreast of what is happening in your industry. Associations promote the interests of their members and provide a network of contacts that can help you find jobs and move your career forward. They can offer a variety of services including job referral services, continuing education courses, insurance, travel benefits, periodicals, and meeting and conference opportunities. A broad list of professional associations is available at www.careercornerstone.org.

► **American Association for Respiratory Care (www.aarc.org)**

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) is a not-for-profit professional association representing more than 37,000 members. Members include respiratory therapists, nurses, physicians, pulmonary laboratory technicians, home health providers, home medical equipment suppliers, industrial sales representatives, manufacturers of respiratory care equipment, and respiratory patients. A network of 50 state societies involves members in local and state activities.



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