

Health Care Careers



Hottest Jobs in Health Care

Demand for jobs in the economy's health-care sector is soaring, thanks to a combination of aging Americans and a newfound focus on well-being.

Baby Boomers, or those born between 1946 and 1964, are retiring by the thousands each day. At the same time, Americans have perhaps never been more health conscious. The result is unprecedented growth opportunity for workers across a broad spectrum of health-care disciplines. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook lists the following jobs in its fastest-growing category, taking into account projected percentage of jobs, salary and flexibility.



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PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Physicians make referrals to physical therapists for conditions including lower-back pain, broken bones and arthritis, as well as for those who are recovering from surgery, stroke, heart disease or accidental injury. They in turn help patients manage pain and improve movement. These jobs are lucrative, growing and flexible, topping the Bureau of Labor Statistics career list by touching on every one of its key measures. Demand is expected to grow

by 49,100 from 239,200 total jobs over the next decade — an impressive 21% growth rate. Physical therapists need a doctor of physical therapy degree, and must be licensed in every state.

DENTAL HYGIENIST

Dental hygienists are charged with identifying oral diseases like gingivitis, while providing preventive care for patients. An associate degree is the typical entry-level educational requirement. Roughly

206,100 Americans worked as dental hygienists in 2020, with a projected growth of 11% per year, or 23,100 jobs, through 2030.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Occupational therapists are expected to be in much higher demand than other occupations, with a 17% increase over the next decade from 131,600 current jobs. That amounts to about 23,000 additional jobs per year. They

treat those with injuries, illnesses or disabilities through everyday therapies, and are usually required to have a master's degree.

HOME HEALTH AIDE

Most people associate health workers with hospitals or local clinics, but the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says 3.5 million worked out of their homes in 2020. That number is only expected to grow over the next decade, by a factor of 33% — or some 1.1 million

jobs. Ease of entry into this field is part of why it's growing so quickly, as home-health aides need only a high school diploma or equivalent, are not typically required to have related occupational experience and only need a short period of on-the-job training to get started. No job on this list is more accessible.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT

Considering how in-demand physical therapists are, it's no surprise that their assistants also rank high on this list. They're supervised by PTs in helping patients with pain management, mobility and physical wellness. Employment is projected to grow by a whopping 32% through 2030. Physical therapist assistants usually need an associate degree from an accredited program, and a license in order to practice.

RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGIST

X-rays are not new technology, but they're still widely relied upon in diagnosing everything from tumors and broken bones to cancers. The market for radiologic technologists is expected keep pace with overall job growth, adding 21,600 total jobs by 2030, or a 9% increase. They typically require an associate degree. About 254,000 people work as radiologic technologists in the U.S., performing diagnostic imaging examinations on countless patients.

Prep for a Health Care Job Fair

Job fairs are as numerous as they are distinct.

Some focus on single-company hirings to fill pressing needs created by retirement, job advancement or outside employment opportunities, while others can be very large multi-institution events organized by private job-fair companies.

The COVID era also saw the advent of virtual job fairs. Whether you're walking into a crowded event space with booth after booth of recruiters or simply trying to connect via the internet, the whole process can seem overwhelming. Still, employers consistently say that impactful personal meetings often make the difference when hiring decisions are made. Here's how to navigate through it all toward an exciting new career opportunity.

STUDY UP BEFOREHAND

Pay close attention to job-fair advertising, since it will help you gauge whether the event is narrow or wide ranging in scope. Attending a virtual event means there are no long lines to greet hiring managers, and no pressure to rush from one booth to another to cover the most amount of ground. In either setting, however, you should research every organization so that your conversations make clear to recruiters that you're knowledgeable about their general operation, specific needs and



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how you can be of value in the future. Arriving prepared, whether at home or in person, gives you a possible advantage that others might not have. Some virtual career fairs run over a number of days, offering more time to study up beforehand — and to personalize your approach — rather

than racing against the proverbial clock. And don't forget to do a final review of prospective recruiters and open positions on the day of the fair; some employers join these events at the last minute.

SHARPEN YOUR RESUME

Customizing your resume

can be critical to success at larger fairs with multiple possible employers. Check for job openings on the company website, and consider rewording key elements to focus on that role. You might also want to adjust other personal marketing materials so that they target specific hiring

managers, the company's posted mission statement or initiatives mentioned on their website and social-media pages. Don't forget to attach contact information beyond a telephone number, including email and LinkedIn details, and follow up a few days later. A personal call or hand-written note, rather than the more typical email, is recommended since that could make a much bigger impression.

CONSIDER YOUR WARDROBE

Think of yourself as a living, breathing resume. Appearing unkempt or in an outfit that's too casual might cause a potential employer to think twice about your candidacy before they've gotten past the handshake stage. Appropriate attire, even in an internet-based setting, conveys respect for the prospective company, capability and the idea that you're worth investing in.

If you're attending a virtual job fair, pay close attention to what else is in the frame behind you, as well. Things like a disorganized workspace or an inappropriate piece of artwork might send the wrong signal.

Remember to stay focused on the conversation, despite all of the distractions found at home or at a bustling event space — and smile! Health-care providers are staffed by energetic, can-do people, and that's who they're looking to hire.

Nurse Practitioners

Demand for nurse practitioners continues to grow as they've become more central to primary care.

As registered nurses with an additional degree or specialized training, they are increasingly relied upon to prescribe treatment, diagnose disease or evaluate injuries. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics now projects a striking 45% growth in the field through 2030 as it becomes more common for NPs to function as primary-care clinicians.

In part, that's because there's a shorter, less costly process to become a nurse practitioner versus the traditional physician track.

At the same time, the profession has received notable endorsements from citizen advocates like the AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A report from the Institute of Medicine previously called on state legislatures to eliminate policies that prevent NPs from practicing to the full extent of their education and training, and still more doors opened.

So how can you get involved in this fast-growing field? Here's more information on what's needed to become a nurse practitioner, a look at what they do and how their role is changing.

THE NURSE PRACTITIONER'S ROLE

Nurse practitioners are among the medical personnel known as advanced practice registered nurses. (Other APRNs include nurse anesthetists, clinical nurse specialists and nurse midwives.) More recently, however, the role of the NP has been quickly expanding. They will often begin appointments by asking



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patients about their medical history, checking vital signs and discussing any new health issues. They may prescribe medications, create treatment plans and order tests. Should the need arise, nurse practitioners can refer patients to specialists. They're also a key resource in maintaining wellness by helping patients develop plans for healthy lifestyle choices and sharing hands-on medical information.

The Affordable Care Act included grants for nurse-managed clinics, financial support for training and a new emphasis on the team-based model for patient care, making clear how integral NPs are becoming in future workforce considerations.

WHAT'S REQUIRED

The National Center for Workforce Analysis is predicting a shortfall of more than 20,000 primary-care physicians by 2025, making nurse practitioners even more vital to maintaining proper care. They are already a trusted member of any primary-care facilities team, and provide a more cost-effective opportunity to increase staff than hiring more physicians. The typical entry-level education for a nurse practitioner is a master's degree. They also must be licensed in their home state, while also passing a national exam for certification.

JOB OUTLOOK

As the Baby Boomer generation con-

tinues to age and insurance coverage expands through the Affordable Care Act, the need for chronic pain and health management will only increase. The Department of Veterans Affairs has also recommended that APRNs be allowed to independently practice in all of its facilities, even in locations where physician oversight is otherwise required. At the same time, primary-care facilities have moved toward more team-based care. As a result, some 271,900 Americans worked as NPs in 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. By the end of the decade, officials project an additional 121,400 jobs will be created in this field.

Closer than you Think

More people than ever are working outside the office setting, and that includes health-care professionals.

Digital.com surveyed 1,000 remote workers in late 2021, finding that two-thirds of respondents wanted to remain at home even after pandemic-related measures were lifted. The health-care field is an emerging choice for anyone interested in stay-at-home employment, or those who have decided to look elsewhere rather than return to the office. There are a number of jobs that require far less education and training than it takes to become a physician or nurse, and yet they're still designed to allow you to make a difference in the world — right from the comfort of your living-room couch.

MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTIONIST

Medical transcriptionists convert audio-recorded reports concerning patients into written documents from doctors, nurse practitioners and other health-care workers. They may work for individual physicians, hospitals or third-party transcription services, but typically do so from home. Some medical transcriptionists are self-employed. They usually need additional post-secondary



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education. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says some 52,400 people worked as medical transcriptionists in 2020.

TELEPHONE TRIAGE NURSE

The job title for a telephone triage nurse says it all. They're nursing professionals who help determine what kind of care

patients need over the phone, offering initial assessments and help with deciding whether they should make a doctor's appointment, seek emergency care or treat themselves.

There are more than 7,024 telephone triage nurses employed in the U.S. according to Zippia. They must earn a degree in nursing, then pass a nursing exam and become

state licensed as a registered nurse.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

Speech-language pathologists focus on communication as well as swallowing disorders. High demand for their services has led to a variety of at-home employment options, as well as the opportunity to

work full- or part-time and even on an as-needed basis.

They typically need at least a master's degree, and most states require licensing. Salaries depend on experience and education, among other factors. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported some 162,600 speech-language pathologists in 2019, with a decade-long growth trend of 25%.

RECRUITER

If you love remote working but still like the occasional work-related outing, becoming a recruiter might be the right career option. They can research possible candidates while at home, then attend job fairs or otherwise schedule screening opportunities to meet with potential new employees. They might also post advertisements for open positions, set up slates of interviews or even make job offers. In some cases, portions of their outreach work — including job fairs — are conducted remotely, as well.

MEDICAL BILLER

The job of medical billers and other health-information specialists is to organize, code and manage patient data. They usually need a college degree or post-secondary certificate, although sometimes only a high-school diploma is required. Some 416,400 Americans were employed in this field in 2020, with overall employment numbers expected to rise 9% over the next decade.

Pharmacy Tech: A Growing Field

Anyone who has picked up a prescription has probably interacted with a pharmacy technician.

They're found in pharmacies both large and small, whether free-standing or as part of grocery or department stores. National chains often employ several pharmacy technicians. They're also hired by health systems with in-house pharmacies to help process prescriptions. Wherever they're employed, pharmacy technicians are on the front lines of everyday health care. That makes for one of the industry's more interesting jobs.

PHARMACY TECH'S ROLE

Working with supervision from local pharmacists, pharmacy technicians serve as a vital link with patients. Depending on the setting, they may be charged with compounding, mixing or measuring medicine, confirming doses with doctors, or getting approval for renewals. Beyond possessing specific technical knowledge, a pharmacy tech often also serves in a customer-service role, answering phones and manning the cash register while helping anyone with in-store issues like scheduling meetings with pharmacists or finding over-the-counter medications.



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In the past, some of those duties may have traditionally been part of the pharmacist's job description. Now, they provide the stepping stones for anyone who wants to move toward their own career as a pharmacist, or perhaps another clinical job.

WHAT'S REQUIRED

At one time, almost all pharmacy techs were trained on the job, applying at a local business and learning things like labeling, shelf stocking and insurance processing from the staff pharmacist. Today, the role of pharmacy

tech typically requires a high-school diploma or equivalent, along with additional learning through on-the-job training. They may also have to complete a post-secondary program in pharmacy technology.

Most states regulate the position, requiring that phar-

macy technicians pass an exam or complete some other form of formal training. Those with associate degrees in pharmacy technology study pharmaceutical sciences, and customer service and management. These courses take about two years to complete, but degree holders can find themselves in greater demand. They may also be moved into a higher pay bracket and recommended for advancement on a shorter timeline.

JOB OUTLOOK

Pharmacy technicians are critical members of our health-care system, working with both pharmacists and patients to ensure safe and effective medicinal care. When starting out, your earnings may be less than more experienced peers. This remains one of the easiest ways to join the health-related workforce, however, and acquiring needed credentials is far less time consuming than in other careers in the broader field of care. Employment opportunities for pharmacy technicians is also projected to grow through 2030, according to government officials. Some 31,700 openings are expected each year over the decade, as workers transfer, earn a promotion or decide to retire. That's part of a larger trend: Health services already account for more than 11 million jobs, including those who are self-employed, and consistently ranks among the fastest-growing occupations.

Healthy Work Habits

Working in health care doesn't necessarily make you a healthy person.

In fact, the demands on people in this field — both in terms of skill set and hours worked — sometimes make it one of the most difficult when it comes to balancing career and well being. Here are a few tips to ensure that you remain healthy enough to help others:

TAKE A BREATH

Overseeing someone else's wellness can make it difficult to take time out for yourself. Health-care professionals are prone to working long, sometimes chaotic days, by the very nature of what they do.

Those who diagnose and treat patients have been working an average of more than 8 hours a day for more than a decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's not counting additional hours — or even entire shifts — worked because of staffing issues. It's important, however, that those who are responsible for the wellness of others aren't felled by their own illnesses — and stress can make us all more prone to becoming sick. Take time for yourself, even if it's simply a short break between patients, tasks or appointments.

HYDRATION MATTERS

Long hours and high stress can distract us from the



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every-day self-care required to live long and healthy lives. Water is a key element in staying focused and physically prepared for everyday challenges in the health-care field. Bring a refillable bottle for water each day, and keep it with you or nearby. Replacing soft drinks — which are high in sugars, caffeine and other additives — with water keeps you hydrated for longer, and can also help with things like

weight-loss goals and stifling unwanted cravings.

PACK A LUNCH

The cafeteria at your local health-care facility is often a great option for busy workers, since it's fast and convenient. But those meals aren't always the healthiest, and the costs can add up. Consider bringing your own lunch or dinner, preparing them in advance with fresh, hardy, far more

inexpensive options. If you pack smart, these homemade options are typically loaded with natural ingredients that will provide you with more energy, too.

STAY IN MOTION

A lot of health care work involves sitting and standing, sometimes for lengthy periods of time. Try not to stay stationary too long, as it's associated with a range of

health issues. Moving around, whether it's something unstructured like walking around the facility or a regularly scheduled gym regimen, can have a significant impact on both your health and your stress levels. It can have a particularly meaningful impact on your heart health. If you find just the right mix of songs for your headphones, you can also get a big boost emotionally.

Animal Health Care

People aren't the only ones who need expert health care, and those who enter this field find a broad range of benefits and rewards.

A veterinarian is often the job we think of first when it comes to animal health care, but these positions are not exclusively focused on everyday pets. Other professionals have the opportunity to travel to exotic places, to study animals in a laboratory setting, and to work with some incredibly interesting wildlife. Here's a look at three options.

ZOO TECHNICIAN

Zoos hire technicians to help veterinarians with the care of exotic animals, with responsibilities that include performing lab tests, giving injections, taking samples and preparing for surgical procedures. Vet tech classes and a two-year associate degree are required, as is passing a national veterinary technician exam. Some states may have additional regulations, as well.

LAB CARETAKER

Want to get up close and personal with animals in a more personal setting? Consider a career as a laboratory animal caretaker, where you'd work closely with biologists, vets and animal scientists. They focus on care, feeding and monitoring of lab ani-



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mals, typically learning on the job. Certification isn't necessarily required, depending on where you live, but those interested in being promoted should consider obtaining one.

ANIMAL BEHAVIORIST

Do you know that animals have their own form of psychologists too? Animal behaviorists study how animals

interact with their environments and with one another, gathering information that helps us understand how to manage their conservation and everyday lives. These behaviorists work in zoos, aquariums and museums and for conservation groups, contributing to decisions on whether domesticated pets are ready to be adopted, or whether a recovered patient

can be returned to the wild.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Wildlife rehabilitation experts play a key role in analyzing and providing care for wounded animals until they are healthy enough to be released again. They act as liaisons with vets, helping to coordinate treatment plans. They also oversee nutritional

plans, and help develop protocol for capturing and restraining various species for non-profit groups, humane societies and various governmental agencies.

This work is particularly important during times of natural disaster, like hurricanes, wildfires or floods. You'll usually need licensing through federal or state authorities to get started.