

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST

Entry Level: Associate's Degree

A respiratory therapist is someone who cares for patients that have trouble breathing; for example, from a chronic respiratory disease, such as asthma or emphysema. They also provide emergency care to patients suffering from heart attacks, stroke, drowning, or shock. Most respiratory therapists work in hospitals.⁵

JOB REQUIREMENTS

What is the exact job title?

- Respiratory Therapist (RT)

How do I become one?

- Complete at least an associate degree, however, many employers prefer to hire a candidate who has earned a bachelor's degree.⁴
- Complete a credentialing exam from the National Board for Respiratory Care.⁴
 - Most candidates complete the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) or the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) designations. The CRT certification is the entry-level certification.⁴
- Earn state licensure. You can find specific contact information for your state here: <http://www.aarc.org/advocacy/state-society-resources/state-licensure-contacts/4>
- Maintain certification by renewing licenses based on your state's requirements.⁴

What qualities do I need?

- **Compassion:** RTs should be able to provide emotional support to patients undergoing treatment and be sympathetic to their needs.³
- **Detail oriented:** RTs must be detail oriented to ensure that patients are receiving the appropriate treatments and medications in a timely manner. They must also monitor and record various pieces of information related to patient care.³
- **Interpersonal skills:** RTs interact with patients and often work as part of a team. They must be able to follow instructions from a supervising physician.³
- **Patience:** RTs may work for long periods with patients who need special attention.³
- **Problem-solving skills:** RTs need strong problem-solving skills. They must evaluate patients' symptoms, consult with other healthcare professionals, and recommend and administer the appropriate treatments.³
- **Science and math skills:** RTs must understand anatomy, physiology, and other sciences and be able to calculate the right dose of a patient's medicine.³

TYPICAL WORK DAY

What do they do?

- Respiratory Therapists diagnose lung and breathing disorders and recommend treatment methods. They interview patients and do chest physical exams to determine what kind of therapy is best for their condition. Consult with physicians to recommend a change in therapy, based on your evaluation of the patient. Analyze breath, tissue, and blood specimens to

1<http://www.aarc.org/careers/what-is-an-rt/>

2https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Respiratory_Therapist/Hourly_Rate

3<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/respiratory-therapists.htm#tab-1>

4<https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/respiratory-therapist/>

5<https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/respiratory-therapist/>

determine levels of oxygen and other gases. Manage ventilators and artificial airway devices for patients who can't breathe normally on their own. Respond to Code Blue or other urgent calls for care. Educate patients and families about lung disease so they can maximize their recovery.¹

Where do they normally work?

- Respiratory therapists usually work in hospitals (81%), nursing care facilities, or offices of physicians.³

What hours do they work?

- Most respiratory therapists work full time. Because they may work in medical facilities, such as hospitals that are always open, some may work evening, night, or weekend hours.³

BENEFITS

What is a typical salary in this field?

- BLS: In 2017, median pay was \$28.98/hour or \$60,280/year.³
- Payscale: \$25.82/hour or \$54,205/year.²

Does this job come with any benefits? (vision, dental, 401k, PTO, etc.)

- Medical: 79%²
- Vision: 62%²
- Dental: 70%²
- None: 19%²

GROWTH

What is the projected job growth?

- Between 2018-2028, job growth is projected to be 21%, much faster than average for all occupations.³

Last Updated: October 2019

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