



## What Can I Do With a Major in Nursing?

### Definition

“Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations.”

ANA definition: [www.nursingworld.org/](http://www.nursingworld.org/)

### Job Titles/Specialty Areas to Consider

Registered Nurses (RNs) can **specialize in a work setting or type of treatment**, such as:

- Ambulatory care
- Critical care
- Emergency or trauma
- Home health care
- Holistic
- Hospice and palliative care
- Long-term care
- Medical-surgical
- Perianesthesia
- Perioperative
- Psychiatric-mental health
- Radiology
- Rehabilitation

RNs **specializing in a particular disease, ailment, or health care condition** are employed in virtually all work settings, including physicians' offices, outpatient treatment facilities, home health care agencies, and hospitals.

- Addictions
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Diabetes management
- Genetics
- HIV/AIDS
- Oncology
- Wound, ostomy, and continence

RNs who **specialize by population** provide preventive and acute care in all health care settings to the segment of the population in which they specialize, including newborns (neonatology), children and adolescents (pediatrics), adults, and the elderly (gerontology or geriatrics).

RNs **specializing in treatment of a particular organ or body system** usually are employed in hospital specialty or critical care units, specialty clinics, and outpatient care facilities.

- Cardiovascular
- Dermatology
- Gastroenterology
- Gynecology
- Nephrology
- Neuroscience
- Ophthalmic
- Orthopedic
- Otorhinolaryngology
- Respiratory
- Urology

While most nurses care for one patient at a time, **public health nurses care for entire populations**. By working with whole communities, public health nurses are able to educate people about health issues, improve community health and safety, and increase access to care.

### **Public health nurses:**

- Monitor health trends and identify health risk factors unique to specific communities
- Set local priorities for health-related interventions to provide the greatest benefit to the most people
- Advocate with local, state and federal authorities to improve access to health services for underserved communities
- Design and implement health education campaigns and disease prevention activities, such as immunizations and screenings
- Tell people about locally available health care programs and services to improve access to care
- Educate and provide direct health care services to vulnerable and at risk populations.

Some nurses have jobs that require **little or no direct patient care**, but still require an active RN license. These might include:

- **Nurse Educators** plan, develop, implement, and evaluate educational programs and curricula for the professional development of student nurses and RNs.

□ **Forensics nurses** participate in the scientific investigation and treatment of abuse victims, violence, criminal activity, and traumatic accident. Infection control nurses identify, track, and control infectious outbreaks in health care facilities and develop programs for outbreak prevention and response to biological terrorism.

□ **Nurse Informaticists** manage and communicate nursing data and information to improve decision making by consumers, patients, nurses, and other health care providers.

□ RNs may also work as health care consultants, public policy advisors, pharmaceutical and medical supply researchers and salespersons, and medical writers and editors.

RNs may **provide basic healthcare to patients outside of health care settings** in such venues as including correctional facilities, schools, summer camps, and the military. Some RNs travel around the US and throughout the world providing care to patients in areas with shortages of healthcare workers.

### Duties

Registered nurses typically do the following:

- Record patients' medical histories and symptoms
- Give patients medicines and treatments
- Set up plans for patients' care or contribute to existing plans
- Observe patients and record observations
- Consult with doctors and other health care professionals
- Operate and monitor medical equipment
- Help perform diagnostic tests and analyze results
- Teach patients and their families how to manage their illnesses or injuries
- Explain what to do at home after treatment

### Day in the Life

Most RNs work in health care facilities. Home health and public health nurses travel to patients' homes, schools, community centers, and other sites. RNs may spend considerable time walking, bending, stretching, and standing. Patients in hospitals and nursing care facilities require 24-hour care; consequently, nurses in these institutions may work nights, weekends, and holidays. RNs also may be on call -- available to work on short notice. Nurses who work in offices, schools, and other settings that do not provide 24-hour care are more likely to work regular business hours. About 20 % of RNs work part time.

### Do you have the most important skills to hear "You're Hired"?

- Communication Skills
- Computer and Technical Literacy
- Interpersonal Skills
- Adaptability
- Research Skills
- Project Management Skills
- Problem-Solving Skill
- Strong Work Ethic
- Emotional Intelligence

### Advanced Degrees

Some nursing specializations require an advanced degree, in addition to earning your BSN. For more information on nursing education programs, go to: [www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nursing-education-programs](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nursing-education-programs)

### Additional Sources of Information

- **National Council of State Boards of Nursing**  
[www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org)
- **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**  
[www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm)
- **Career Onestop:** [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)
- **American Association of Colleges of Nursing**  
[www.aacn.nche.edu/students](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/students)
- **Top Registered Nursing Careers**  
<http://www.rntobsonline.com/careers/>
- **Skill Explorer**  
<http://skillexplorer.wisconsin.gov>

### Professional Organizations

- **American Nurses Association**  
[www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org)
- **National Student Nurses Association**  
[www.nсна.org](http://www.nсна.org)
- **International Council of Nurses**  
[www.icn.ch/about-icn/about-icn/](http://www.icn.ch/about-icn/about-icn/)
- **Sigma Theta Tau International**  
[www.nursingsociety.org](http://www.nursingsociety.org)
- **Wisconsin Nurses Association**  
[www.wisconsinnurses.org/](http://www.wisconsinnurses.org/)



**School of Nursing**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

For more information about the nursing major and advanced degrees at UW-Madison, go to:  
<https://nursing.wisc.edu>