

Careers in Nursing – what’s the difference?

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

The CNA performs patient care tasks, such as taking vital signs (blood pressure, temperature, etc.), assisting with activities of daily living (bathing, feeding, etc.), and documentation of care given. The CNA works under the supervision of a Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, or other licensed health care professional.

Education: Graduation from CNA training program and certification

Setting: Hospitals, nursing homes, home care, clinics, assisted living facilities

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

The LPN participates in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of nursing care in settings where nursing takes place under the direction of a Registered Nurse or physician. An LPN performs various patient care activities which include data collection, administering medications, performing skilled nursing interventions (such as sterile dressing changes, insertion of foley catheters, maintenance of feeding tubes, etc.) and documentation of patient care.

Education: Practical nursing program either in a college setting or technical education setting (1 to 2 years) and licensure

Setting: Long term care facilities, hospitals, physician offices, home care, clinics

Registered Nurse (RN)

The RN is a professional nurse who assesses human responses, and plans, implements and evaluates nursing care for individuals or families for whom the nurse is responsible. RNs collect complete and ongoing data; analyze the health status of patients and families; and carries out interventions which promote, maintain, and restore health. RNs provide both direct and indirect patient care; engage in patient and family health education; and supervise LPNs, CNAs and other health care workers in the care of patients. The professional nurse advocates for the patient and family with other members of the healthcare team.

Education: Associate degree in nursing (ADN), bachelor of science degree in nursing (BSN), or a diploma in nursing (approximately two to five years) and licensure

Setting: A variety of patient care settings, including hospitals (specialty areas: medical-surgical, pediatrics, labor and delivery, psychiatric, rehabilitation, operating room, critical care, emergency, trauma, neonatal, cardiac, oncology, dialysis, and neurology), ambulatory care centers, long-term care facilities, home care, health departments, physicians’ offices, schools, military

Nurse Anesthetist

The nurse anesthetist is an advanced practice registered nurse who provides anesthesia care to patients undergoing surgery, delivery of a baby, or other procedures. The nurse anesthetists have several vital responsibilities including the administration of anesthesia and monitoring the patient’s condition during anesthesia and throughout recovery. The nurse anesthetist may work in collaboration with a number of health care professionals including surgeons, anesthesiologists, and dentists.

Education: RN with master’s degree in nurse anesthesia, national certification is required

Setting: Hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, physicians’ offices

Nurse Midwife

The Nurse Midwife is an advanced practice registered nurse who provides care to child-bearing women during preconception, prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum periods. Nurse Midwifery care focuses on the needs of the individual and family for physical care, emotional and social support and active involvement of significant others according to cultural values and

personal preferences. The Nurse Midwife may prescribe drugs and use technology when needed during child birth.

Education: RN with completion of nurse midwifery program

Setting: Hospitals, clinics, private practice, homes

Nurse Practitioner (NP)

The Nurse Practitioner (NP) is an advanced practice registered nurse who diagnoses, treats, evaluates, and manages acute and chronic illness and disease. NPs obtain medical histories; conduct physical examinations; order, perform, and interpret diagnostic studies; prescribe medications; physical therapy and other rehabilitation treatments; perform minor surgeries and procedures; collaborate with physicians and other health professionals; and counsel and educate patients on health behaviors, self-care skills, and treatment options. Nurse Practitioners can specialize in a variety of areas; such as family practice, pediatrics, OB/GYN-women's health, psychiatric/mental health, oncology, geriatrics, and emergency and acute care.

Education: RN with masters of Science degree in nursing (MSN), state licensure and national certification required

Setting: Healthcare organizations, private practice, physician's offices, clinics