CAREER LAUNCHER

Nurse Anesthetist

"Surgery can be scary. Being put to sleep with a drug can be even scarier. Depending on the type of surgery, some patients can even stay awake during their operation. Patients can be sure that I will give them the best anesthesia care possible, whatever type of surgery they have."

➤ **Education needed:** RN license plus 2-year certificate or master's degree in nurse anesthesia

➤ **Salary range:** $100,000 – $155,000 annually

➤ **Related jobs:** Emergency medical technician, occupational therapist, registered nurse, respiratory therapist

Nurse Anesthetist

➤ ## What I do every day

When patients need anesthesia, I interview them to learn their medical history. Then I obtain their consent and signature. Before surgery, I develop an anesthetic plan. During the procedure, I administer the anesthetics and fluids to sedate the patient properly. As patients recover from anesthesia, I administer medications, fluids, or oxygen to provide relief from pain and to prevent complications. I also provide follow-up care to manage any side effects or complications from anesthesia.

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➤ ## The best part of my job

Patient education is an enjoyable part of my job. Most patients know little about anesthesia. Prior to the surgery, I explain what I'll be doing before, during, and after the operation. I encourage patients to play an active role in selecting the best anesthesia for them.

➤ ## The worst part of my job

Life threatening emergencies occur during surgery occasionally. If a problem occurs with the patient while I'm administering anesthesia, I feel responsible.

➤ What I need to know and be able to do

Nurse anesthetists need to know anatomy and physiology, and they should fully understand the anesthesia drugs that are used commonly. They must be able to administer the drugs and monitor patients of all ages during surgery and throughout the recovery process. They need to understand the variety of surgical procedures available. They should be capable of responding quickly in case an anesthesia emergency develops during surgery.

➤ How I prepared to be a nurse anesthetist

Immediately after graduating from high school, I entered nursing school and earned my bachelor of science degree in nursing (BSN). I worked as a licensed registered nurse for seven years before enrolling in an

accredited nurse anesthetist program. This was a two-year master's degree program that included classroom study and clinical practice. After earning my degree, I passed a national certification examination to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). To maintain my certification, I take mandatory continuing education courses every two years.

➤ How I could have prepared better

I wish I had more experience with financial management. After a recent promotion, I'm in charge of monitoring the budget in the anesthesia department, but I have no background in financial management or accounting.

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Math Skill Check

➤ Skill Check 1

Mepivacaine hydrochloride is one type of anesthetic that can be injected into a patient's body before and during surgery. The amount, or dose, of the anesthetic used is determined by the weight of the patient. For children under 30 pounds, mepivacaine is administered at a dose of 2.5 milligrams per pound. If a child weighs 22 pounds, how many milligrams of mepivacaine should she be given?

Answer: _____

➤ Skill Check 2

Sometimes anesthetic doses are measured in milligrams per kilogram, rather than per pound. In this case, you must convert the patient's weight into a metric equivalent. To convert pounds to kilograms, divide by 2.205.

Convert the following weights into kilograms. Round your answer to the nearest whole number.

199 pounds _____

201 pounds _____

155 pounds _____

130 pounds _____

 75 pounds _____

➤ Skill Check 1

General anesthesia and regional anesthesia are two major categories of drugs a nurse anesthetist administers to control pain during surgery. General anesthesia blocks the pain center at the brain and produces a state of unconsciousness and a loss of reflexes. It is used for long, complicated surgeries.

Regional anesthesia produces a loss of pain in only one area of the body and does not cause unconsciousness. It is used for simple, short surgeries. The type of anesthesia used also depends on the age, physical condition, and personal preference of the patient.

From the list below, identify the one surgery that requires general anesthesia.

a. A heart transplant

b. Removal of a mole

c. Biopsy of a cyst

d. Removal of an abscessed tooth

Answer: _____

➤ Skill Check 2

It is your job as a nurse anesthetist to administer the proper amount of anesthetic that will produce a loss of consciousness and will allow the surgeon to operate without the patient feeling any pain.

At which of these four stages of general anesthesia would surgery begin?

1. Onset: the patient becomes drowsy

2. Excitement: the patient loses consciousness

3. Surgical anesthesia: the patient loses most reflexes and feels no pain

4. Danger level: the vital functions become depressed, the patient stops breathing, and the heart stops beating

Answer: _____