

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

↑ CAREER LAUNCHER

Nursing Aide



“Patients feel confident knowing I’m here to help them. When they need assistance, all they have to do is ring their call bell, and I’ll be with them in seconds.”



- **Education needed:** High school diploma
- **Salary range:** \$16,640 – \$33,280 annually
- **Related jobs:** Dietary aide, home health care aide, psychiatric aide

➤ What I do every day

I work in a community hospital, where I answer patients' call bells, make beds, serve meals, and bathe and dress patients. At the beginning of my shift, I walk from room to room taking the temperature of patients and checking their pulse, respiration, and blood pressure. I report any changes in a patient's condition to the nursing or medical staff.

➤ The best part of my job

Most patients thank me when I do a good job. When they tell me they look forward to my coming into their room, I feel needed and appreciated. I also enjoy being in a medical environment and working with doctors and nurses. It's a great place to learn new things.

➤ The worst part of my job

I don't like caring for disoriented or irritable patients. Some of my duties are unpleasant, like emptying bed pans and changing soiled linens.

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➤ What I need to know and be able to do

Nursing aides bathe, groom, and feed patients. They must be able to use thermometers and stethoscopes and read watches with second hands. Since nurses rely on nursing aides to provide routine nursing care, the aides must be able to work as part of a team. They must be willing to perform routine, repetitive tasks and be able to follow directions. Remaining tactful, patient, and understanding when working with sick or injured people is essential. Nursing aides need to know basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

➤ How I prepared to be a nursing aide

I started working as a volunteer in a local hospital when I was in high school. After I was hired as a nursing aide, my employer gave me

on-the-job training. I also attended a two-day class for newly hired aides that was taught by a licensed practical nurse. Topics covered in that class were elementary anatomy and physiology, infection control, personal care skills, and how to lift and turn patients.

➤ How I could have prepared better

I wish I knew more medical terminology. If I had taken a course in medical terminology, I could understand the complex medical terms the nurses and doctors use.

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Math
Skill Check

► Skill Check 1

You assist the nursing staff by observing patients and taking their vital signs, which includes performing a respiratory assessment. Changes could indicate illness or a worsening medical condition.

Practice observing a classmate's respiratory functioning. Using a watch or clock with a second hand, count the number of times your classmate breathes in 30 seconds. Multiply this number by two to get an estimate of the number of breaths taken in one minute. A normal respiratory rate is 12–18 breaths per minute. What number did you get?

Number of respirations: _____

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► Skill Check 2

Mrs. Elwood is a 68-year-old woman sent to the recovery room following coronary bypass surgery. She has extremely low blood pressure immediately following surgery. Your nursing supervisor instructs you to take her vital signs every 10 minutes for the first two hours after surgery and every one hour after that until your shift ends at 11:00 p.m. If it's 3:20 p.m. when should you first take the patient's blood pressure, and at what other times should you measure her vital signs?

Answer:

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Skill Check

► Skill Check 1

As a nursing aide, you know that a normal blood pressure measurement is approximately 120/80. In medical terminology, the prefix hypo- means below normal and the prefix hyper- means above normal. Patients who have high blood pressure are hypertensive, and patients who have low blood pressure are hypotensive.

Look at the following blood pressure measurements. Write next to each measurement whether it is hypotensive or hypertensive.

98/70 mm Hg _____

160/92 mm Hg _____

175/100 mm Hg _____

110/69 mm Hg _____

100/75 mm Hg _____

115/70 mm Hg _____

200/110 mm Hg _____

187/90 mm Hg _____

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► Skill Check 2

You often help nurses lift, turn, and move patients. To prevent back injuries to yourself, you must use proper body mechanics when lifting patients or medical equipment. To lift an object properly, you should:

1. Think and plan your movements before actually lifting the object.
2. Avoid lifting objects while you are in a twisted position.
3. Face the object.
4. Bend your knees and hips, not your waist.
5. Hold the object close to your chest.
6. Never lift and turn at the same time.

Place a large object on the floor and ask a classmate to lift it. Do not read the lifting instructions to your classmate. Observe the body mechanics he or she uses naturally and answer the questions that follow. Did your classmate:

1. Face the object? _____ Yes _____ No
2. Bend at the knees and hips? _____ Yes _____ No
3. Hold the object close to the chest? _____ Yes _____ No
4. Turn and lift at the same time? _____ Yes _____ No
5. Use proper body mechanics? _____ Yes _____ No