

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST



Summary of profession

Respiratory therapists help people who suffer from chronic respiratory diseases like asthma, bronchitis and emphysema. People who have had heart attacks or who have sleep disorders and infants who are born prematurely might also need respiratory therapy to help them breathe more easily. They also provide emergency care to patients suffering from heart attacks, drowning or shock.

Working hours, patterns and environments

Respiratory therapists are on their feet for long periods and may need to lift or turn disabled patients. Therapists work closely with registered nurses, physicians and surgeons, and medical assistants. 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.

Education and skills

Respiratory therapists must have a minimum of an associate degree from an accredited respiratory therapy education program. Many students get a bachelor's degree and some go on to earn a graduate degree.

Job growth and opportunities

With experience, respiratory therapists will find their career options widen, particularly if they work in hospitals, which still employ the majority of respiratory therapists. Respiratory therapists who excel on the job have no problem rising up the ranks from staff therapist, to shift supervisor, to department manager.