



Respiratory Therapist

Course Overview: Focuses on careers in planning, managing, and providing therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development.

Career Goal (O*NET Code): Respiratory Therapist (29-1126) - Respiratory therapists care for patients who have trouble breathing; for example, from a chronic respiratory disease, such as asthma or emphysema. Their patients range from premature infants with undeveloped lungs to elderly patients who have diseased lungs. They also provide emergency care to patients suffering from heart attacks, drowning, or shock.

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

SUGGESTED COURSEWORK

EXTENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|---|---|--|-----------|---|
| Middle School | 8th | HS Courses: | (Local districts may list high school credit courses here) | | | <p>Curricular Experiences: *** Health Occupations Students of America</p> <p>Career Learning Experiences: Career Preparation Internship Job Shadowing Clinical Rotations Certifications Clinical Volunteer Work (local hospitals & medical facilities)</p> <p>Extracurricular Experiences:*** Language Immersion Programs National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine School Newspaper Student Council UIL Academic Competitions Yearbook</p> <p>Service Learning Experiences: Boy/Girl Scouts Campus Service Organizations Community Service Volunteer Medical Mission Trips Peer Mentoring / Peer Tutoring Special Olympics</p> |
| | 9th | Courses*: | English I Algebra I or Geometry Biology | World Geography Foreign Language I Physical Education or Athletics | Fine Arts | |
| | | Career-Related Electives: | Principles of Health Science | | | |
| 10th | Courses: | English II Geometry or Algebra II Chemistry | World History Foreign Language II Elective | | | |
| | | Career-Related Electives: | Medical Terminology and Pathophysiology | | | |
| 11th | Core Courses: | English III Algebra II or Pre-Calculus Physics | United States History Foreign Language III ** Professional Communications or Speech | Elective | | |
| | | Career-Related Electives: | Health Science | | | |
| 12th | Core Courses: | English IV Pre-Calculus or Calculus 4th Science | Government/Economics Elective Elective | | | |
| | | Career-Related Electives: | Practicum in Health Science | | | |

COLLEGE CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES -- High School

Students should take Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual credit, Advanced Technical Credit (ATC), or locally articulated courses (Tech Prep), if possible. List those courses that count for college credit on your campus.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| Postsecondary | How to Become a Respiratory Therapist Respiratory therapists who work in home care teach patients and their families to use ventilators and other life-support systems in their homes. Respiratory therapists need an associate's or bachelor's degree. Respiratory therapists are licensed in all states except Alaska; requirements vary by state. | | | Carrer Options (Sample of reported job titles) | | Professional Associations: • American Association for Respiratory Care • Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care • National Board for Respiratory Care, Inc. |
| | | Texas Southmost College | South Texas College | Texas State Technical College | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respiratory Therapist (RT) Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP) Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) Clinical Coordinator of Respiratory Therapy Director of Cardiopulmonary Services Respiratory Therapy Director Staff Respiratory Therapist | |
| | | Respiratory Care (AAS) | Respiratory Therapy (AAS) | | | |
| | | The University of Texas at Brownsville | The University of Texas - Pan American | | | |

* Students must meet local & state high school graduation requirements. ** Required course for the Distinguished Graduation Plan (in addition to other measures). *** Based on campus availability. Students may select other elective courses for personal enrichment purposes.

This plan of study serves as a guide, along with other career planning materials, for pursuing a career path and is based on the most recent information as of 2009. All plans meet high school graduation requirements as well as college entrance requirements.



Respiratory Therapist

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| TEA Industry Cluster | Health Science |
| SOC Code | 29-1126 |
| Identified by | Tech Prep Occupations |
| Projected Growth (2018) | 31% |
| BISD Magnet School Available | Yes |

Source: Demand Occupations by Cluster, updated June 27, 2012

Description

What Respiratory Therapists Do

Respiratory therapists care for patients who have trouble breathing; for example, from a chronic respiratory disease, such as asthma or emphysema. Their patients range from premature infants with undeveloped lungs to elderly patients who have diseased lungs. They also provide emergency care to patients suffering from heart attacks, drowning, or shock.

Duties

Respiratory therapists typically do the following:

- Interview and examine patients with breathing or cardiopulmonary disorders
- Consult with physicians to develop patient treatment plans
- Perform diagnostic tests such as measuring lung capacity
- Treat patients, using a variety of methods, including chest physiotherapy and aerosol medications
- Monitor and record the progress of treatment
- Supervise respiratory therapy technicians during tests and evaluate the findings of the tests
- Teach patients how to use treatments

Respiratory therapists use various tests to evaluate patients. For example, therapists test lung capacity by having patients breathe into an instrument that measures the volume and flow of oxygen when they inhale and exhale. Respiratory therapists may also take blood samples and use a blood gas analyzer to test the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels present.

Respiratory therapists perform chest physiotherapy on patients to remove mucus from their lungs and make it easier for them to breathe. Removing mucus is necessary for patients suffering from lung diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, and involves the therapist vibrating the patient's rib cage, often by tapping the patient's chest and encouraging him or her to cough.

Respiratory therapists may connect patients who cannot breathe on their own to ventilators to deliver oxygen to the lungs. Therapists insert a tube in the patient's windpipe (trachea), and connect the tube to ventilator equipment. They set and monitor the equipment to ensure that the patient is receiving the correct amount of oxygen at the correct rate.

Respiratory therapists who work in home care teach patients and their families to use ventilators and other life-support systems in their homes. During these visits, they may inspect and clean equipment, check the home for environmental

hazards, and ensure that patients know how to use their medications. Therapists also make emergency home visits when necessary.

In some hospitals, respiratory therapists are involved in related areas, such as counseling people on how to stop smoking and diagnosing breathing problems for people with sleep apnea.

Training Opportunities Linked to Those Jobs (Degree Types and Colleges/Universities)

How to Become a Respiratory Therapist

Respiratory therapists who work in home care teach patients and their families to use ventilators and other life-support systems in their homes.

Respiratory therapists need an associate's or bachelor's degree. Respiratory therapists are licensed in all states except Alaska; requirements vary by state.

Education

Respiratory therapists need at least an associate's degree, but employers look favorably on applicants who have more education. Many colleges and universities, vocational-technical institutes, and the Armed Forces offer training. Most programs award an associate's or bachelor's degree.

All programs have clinical components that allow therapists to earn course credit and gain supervised, practical experience treating patients.

Respiratory therapy programs include courses in human anatomy and physiology, chemistry, physics, microbiology, pharmacology, and mathematics. Other courses deal with therapeutic and diagnostic procedures and tests, equipment, patient assessment, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

High school students interested in applying to respiratory therapy programs should take courses in health, biology, mathematics, chemistry, and physics.

Licenses

Respiratory therapists are licensed in all states except Alaska, although requirements vary by state. Licensure requirements in most states include completing a state or professional certification exam. For specific state requirements, contact your state's health board.

Certification

Many employers prefer to hire respiratory therapists who have certification. Certification is not always required, but it is widely respected throughout the occupation. Certification usually requires graduating from an accredited program and passing a certification exam and is often required in order to get a state license.

The [National Board for Respiratory Care \(NBRC\)](#) is the main certifying body for respiratory therapists. The Board offers two levels of certification: the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) and the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT).

The first-level certification available from NBRC for respiratory therapists is the CRT certification. Applicants must have earned an associate's degree from an accredited respiratory therapy program, or completed the equivalent coursework in a bachelor's degree program, and pass an exam.

The second-level certification available from NBRC is the RRT certification. Applicants must have a CRT certification,

meet other education or experience requirements, and pass an exam.

Important Qualities

Compassion. Respiratory therapists should be able to provide emotional support to patients undergoing treatment and be sympathetic to their needs.

Detail oriented. Respiratory therapists must be detail oriented to ensure that patients are receiving the appropriate treatments and medications in a timely manner. They must also monitor and record various pieces of information related to patient care.

Interpersonal skills. Respiratory therapists interact with patients and often work as part of a team. They must be able to follow instructions from a supervising physician.

Patience. Respiratory therapists may work for long periods with patients who need special attention.

Problem-solving skills. Respiratory therapists need strong problem-solving skills. They must evaluate patients' symptoms, consult with other healthcare professionals, and recommend and administer the appropriate treatments.

Science and mathematical skills. Respiratory therapists must understand anatomy, physiology, and other sciences and be able to calculate the right dose of a patient's medicine.

| Texas Southmost College | South Texas College | Texas State Technical College | The University of Texas at Brownsville | The University of Texas - Pan American |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Respiratory Care (AAS) | Respiratory Therapy (AAS) | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Local Employers

| Employer | City | | Employer | City |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| Aaron's Rental Purchase | Brownsville | | Aaron's Rental Purchase | Harlingen |
| Abc Pediatrics | Brownsville | | Alpha Temporary Hosp Staffing | Harlingen |
| Anesthesia Consultants | Brownsville | | Back To Action Inc | Harlingen |
| Asthma Center | Brownsville | | Cardiovascular Associates | Harlingen |
| Bienestar Counseling Ctr | Brownsville | | Casa DE Amigos | Harlingen |

Career Options (Specific Job Types)

Sample of reported job titles:

- Respiratory Therapist (RT)
- Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)
- Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP)
- Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT)
- Clinical Coordinator of Respiratory Therapy
- Director of Cardiopulmonary Services
- Respiratory Therapy Director
- Staff Respiratory Therapist

Salary Ranges

Wages for Respiratory Therapists

| Location | Pay Period | 2011 | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | 10% | 25% | Median | 75% | 90% |
| United States | Hourly | \$19.55 | \$22.63 | \$26.56 | \$31.29 | \$35.77 |
| | Yearly | \$40,700 | \$47,100 | \$55,200 | \$65,100 | \$74,400 |
| Texas | Hourly | \$19.65 | \$22.54 | \$25.63 | \$28.47 | \$32.81 |
| | Yearly | \$40,900 | \$46,900 | \$53,300 | \$59,200 | \$68,200 |
| Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA | Hourly | \$19.60 | \$21.59 | \$25.12 | \$29.09 | \$33.86 |
| | Yearly | \$40,800 | \$44,900 | \$52,200 | \$60,500 | \$70,400 |
| McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX MSA | Hourly | \$18.97 | \$23.51 | \$27.52 | \$32.48 | \$36.24 |
| | Yearly | \$39,500 | \$48,900 | \$57,200 | \$67,600 | \$75,400 |

Professional Associations Linked to the Careers

For more information about respiratory therapists, visit

[American Association for Respiratory Care](#)

For a list of accredited educational programs for respiratory care practitioners, visit

[Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care](#)

For a list of state licensing agencies, as well as information on gaining credentials in respiratory care, visit

[National Board for Respiratory Care, Inc.](#)

Sources

The information provided in this document was collected from the following sources:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>)
- O*NET OnLine (<http://www.onetonline.org/>)
- Texas CARES (<http://www.texascaresonline.com/>)
- CareerOneStop (<http://www.careeronestop.org/>)