



## Health Career Directory

### Respiratory Therapist

#### General overview

Respiratory Therapists help doctors and the healthcare team in the diagnosis, treatment, and care of patients with respiratory and cardiopulmonary disorders. Cardiopulmonary means relating to, or affecting, the heart and lungs.

In BC, Respiratory Therapist performs cardiopulmonary technology duties. They assist with the technical aspects of diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and pulmonary disease. Respiratory Therapists perform artificial respiration, and external cardiac massage (CPR). They also assist with the transport of critically ill patients.

Respiratory Therapists communicate with physicians and health-care staff to help develop and adapt individual patient care plans. They may participate in home-care programs for patients with chronic respiratory conditions. They may also provide patient and family education.

This is a relatively small occupational group. The full-time (full year) salary is above the provincial average, likely reflecting the higher education requirements, as well as increased responsibilities associated with occupations in this group. Men and women are equally represented in this occupational group.

#### Main roles and responsibilities

- provide advanced life support for very ill patients, patients who have experienced trauma, and patients who are in/have had surgery
- help with cardiopulmonary resuscitation and advanced cardiac life support
- stabilize high-risk patients being moved by air or ground ambulance
- provide support in high-risk deliveries for babies who have trouble breathing
- help deliver anesthesia in the operating room
- administer inhaled drugs and medical gases such as asthma medication and oxygen
- perform various tests to measure cardiopulmonary (heart-lung) function and assess for sleep disordered breathing
- provide hyperbaric oxygen therapy
- provide respiratory rehabilitation services
- teach patients to manage a variety of medical conditions including asthma
- provide respiratory care to adults and children in their homes
- administer and provide care in cardiac diagnostic clinics, pulmonary function clinics, and sleep disorder labs

- educate patients, members of other healthcare professions, and the public on topics like smoking cessation.
- advance the practice of respiratory therapy by doing research and creating clinical practice guidelines
- fill managerial, administrative, and leadership positions in healthcare
- work in different types of jobs in private industries such as medical equipment sales, service and clinical support.

Respiratory therapists perform:

- diagnostic tests
- arterial blood gas analysis
- cardiopulmonary function tests.

Respiratory Therapists operate and monitor respiratory equipment in order to administer treatments such as:

- oxygen therapy
- oxygen-air mixtures
- humidified air
- aerosolized medications.

They also operate, monitor, maintain and test a range of diagnostic and therapeutic equipment.

Other duties include: assessing patients and performing or helping with interventions. These interventions include:

- airway maintenance
- line insertions
- inductions
- intubations.

### **Who is suited for to become a respiratory therapist?**

Respiratory Therapists are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- good communication skills
- good organizational, critical thinking and problem solving skills
- compassion and an interest in caring for others
- the ability to act quickly and decisively in challenging situations
- the ability to work independently and in a team environment.
- good attention to details
- strong equipment skills and computer skills
- work well under pressure.

### **Who employs this type of professional?**

Most Respiratory Therapists work in community health clinics and hospital, particularly high-risk areas including:

- intensive care units
- emergency departments
- operating rooms
- neonatal nurseries
- general hospital wards
- outpatient clinics
- specialized medical centres, such as sleep labs

- patients' homes.

Respiratory Therapists should enjoy using equipment in order to do tasks that require exactness.

They should enjoy working with clear guidelines and organized methods. Finally they should be comfortable communicating with people (patients, families and other healthcare professionals). Shift work is typical for Respiratory Therapists. This might involve working weekends, evenings, nights and holidays. Shifts may be up to 12 hours long. The work can be physically tiring because these workers are required to spend long periods standing and walking in hospitals. As well, the work often can involve a significant amount of bending and lifting.

### **Required training & education to become respiratory therapists?**

To become a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) with the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT), individuals must complete both an accredited Respiratory Therapy program in Canada and the national registration exams provided by the Canadian Board for Respiratory Care. All Respiratory Therapy training programs in Canada are a minimum of three years.

Respiratory Therapists may also become members of the British Columbia Society of Respiratory Therapists (BCSRT). For more information, visit the CSRT website at: <http://www.csrt.com> and the BCSRT website at: <http://www.bcsrt.com>.

Workers already licensed or certified in another province or territory, in a provincially regulated occupation, will have their credentials recognized in BC. A list of provincial regulators can be found at: <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/labourmobility>.

Available seats into this program are limited. Go to the institution of your interest for the complete list of all entry requirements and intake application dates

### **Salary**

\$26.17 - \$32.67 per hour

### **Career Advancement**

Experienced Respiratory Therapists may advance to a clinical specialist position, supervisory/leadership positions, or teaching.

Respiratory Therapist may specialize in areas, such as:

- anaesthesia
- critical care
- neonatal/pediatrics
- cardiopulmonary diagnostics
- respiratory home care.

### **Resources**

#### **Education Programs**

**Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)**

[www.nait.ab.ca](http://www.nait.ab.ca)

**Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)**

[www.sait.ab.ca](http://www.sait.ab.ca)

**Thompson Rivers University**

[www.tru.ca](http://www.tru.ca)

**University of Manitoba - School of Medical Rehabilitation**

[www.umanitoba.ca/medrehab/](http://www.umanitoba.ca/medrehab/)

**New Brunswick Community College (NBCC)**

[www.saintjohn.nbcc.nb.ca](http://www.saintjohn.nbcc.nb.ca)

**CCNB-Dieppe**

[www.ccnb.nb.ca](http://www.ccnb.nb.ca) and [www.umoncton.ca](http://www.umoncton.ca)

**College of the North Atlantic (CNA)**

<http://www.cna.nl.ca/>

**QEII/Dalhousie University, School of Health Sciences**

[www.dal.ca](http://www.dal.ca)

**The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences**

[www.michener.ca](http://www.michener.ca)

**Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology**

[www.algonquincollege.com](http://www.algonquincollege.com)

**Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology**

[www.canadorec.on.ca](http://www.canadorec.on.ca)

**La Cité collégiale - Collège d'arts appliqués et de technologie**

[www.lacitec.on.ca](http://www.lacitec.on.ca)

**Fanshawe College of Applied Arts and Technology**

[www.fanshawec.ca](http://www.fanshawec.ca)

**Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning**

[www.conestogac.on.ca](http://www.conestogac.on.ca)

**Vanier College**

[www.vaniercollege.qc.ca](http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca)

**Cégep de Sherbrooke**

[www.cegepsherbrooke.qc.ca](http://www.cegepsherbrooke.qc.ca)

**Collège de Rosemont**

[www.crosemont.qc.ca](http://www.crosemont.qc.ca)

**Cégep de Chicoutimi**

[www.cegep-chicoutimi.qc.ca](http://www.cegep-chicoutimi.qc.ca)

**Collège Ellis**

[www.ellis.qc.ca](http://www.ellis.qc.ca)

**Cégep de l'Outaouais**

[www.cegepoutaouais.qc.ca](http://www.cegepoutaouais.qc.ca)

**Financial assistance and bursaries**

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada\\_student\\_loan/index.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml)

**Associations**

British Columbia Society of Respiratory Therapists

<http://www.bcsrt.ca/>

Canadian Association of Cardio-pulmonary Technologists

<http://www.cacpt.ca/>

Canadian Society of Clinical Perfusion

<http://www.cscp.ca/index.asp>

Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapist

<http://www.csrt.com/>