

Practical Nurse

Two years of college to a nursing licence and a job in any town in Canada. Hands-on, in demand, cheaper than a degree.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$55k to \$76k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, long-term care homes, clinics, home care

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Grade 12 English, biology and a math. Chemistry helps.
- 2 Practical nursing diploma** 2 years
2 years at a public college, 4 semesters, with clinical placements in hospitals and long-term care. Some colleges run compressed versions.
- 3 Registration exam** After graduation
Most provinces use the CPNRE (Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination). Ontario and BC use a newer computer exam called REx-PN (Regulatory Exam, Practical Nurse).
- 4 Register with your provincial college** A few weeks
In Ontario that is the College of Nurses of Ontario and the title is RPN (registered practical nurse). Everywhere else the title is LPN (licensed practical nurse).

Pros and cons

- + Two years of school to a licensed, in-demand job
- + Cheap tuition, union pay grid, pension
- + Hands-on patient care every day
- Clearly lower pay than an RN (registered nurse) for hard work
- Nights, weekends and holidays
- Physically heavy: lifting, turning, on your feet all shift

Good to know

The second-largest nursing group

Canada had roughly 145,000 licensed practical nurses in 2025. Only registered nurses are a bigger group in health care.

Same job, different name

Ontario calls the role RPN (registered practical nurse). Every other province says LPN (licensed practical nurse). Quebec says infirmière auxiliaire. The licence transfers either way.

Optional boosts

Bridge to RN (registered nurse). Specialty courses. Operating room certificate. Charge nurse in long-term care.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Licensed practical nurses, wages (updated Nov 2025)

College of Nurses of Ontario: RPN registration exams

College of Nurses of Ontario: Application and membership fees

REx-PN: Fees and payment

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/practical-nurse>



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