

Nurse Practitioner

A nurse with a graduate degree who can diagnose, order tests and prescribe. Six years of school, six figures, and one of the fastest growing jobs in the country.

TYPICAL PAY

\$132,300

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$101k to \$174k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Primary care clinics, hospitals, urgent care, community health ce...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry and math. Volunteering in a care home or hospital helps your nursing application more than you expect.
- 2 BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing)** 4 years
Four years, with clinical placements built in. Some people start with a two-year nursing degree and bridge up later.
- 3 Pass the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination)** Weeks after graduating
The national exam for registered nurses, run by the board that represents every state nursing board. Then you get your state license.
- 4 Work as a registered nurse** 1 to 3 years
Most graduate programs want real bedside experience, and it is where you learn to recognize a sick patient on sight.
- 5 Graduate degree** 2 to 3 years
A master's or a doctorate in nursing practice, in a population focus like family, pediatrics, psychiatric or acute care.
- 6 National certification and state license** Months
Pass the certification exam for your population focus, then register with the state board as an advanced practice nurse.

Pros and cons

- + Six figures without medical school or a residency
- + You earn a full nursing wage through much of the training
- + Among the fastest growing occupations in the country
- Six to eight years and real graduate school debt
- What you are allowed to do changes at the state line
- Short appointments and a lot of documentation after hours

Good to know

Your license changes at the state line

In some states a nurse practitioner can open a clinic and practice independently. Drive across one border and the same person legally needs a physician agreement for their entire career. Nothing about t...

The federal outlook is one of the brightest going

The government flags this occupation as rapidly growing with very likely new openings. Very few well paid jobs carry that rating at the same time as a six figure median.

Optional boosts

Family practice. Psychiatric mental health. Acute care. Pediatrics or neonatal.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Nurse Practitioners (29-1171.00)
American Association of Nurse Practitioners: state practice environment
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
National Council of State Boards of Nursing

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/nurse-practitioner>



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