

Quick Guides to the Health Professions

Nurses and Nurse Practitioners

What is a registered nurse and a nurse practitioner?

A registered nurse (RN) is a healthcare professional whose role is to promote, maintain, and restore holistic health for individuals and communities.

A nurse practitioner (NP) is an RN who has completed graduate education and training in advanced clinical practice. NPs conduct health assessments, diagnose health conditions, and treat and manage illness. They also order and interpret diagnostic tests, perform procedures, and prescribe medications.

What do registered nurses and nurse practitioners do?

RNs are self-regulated healthcare professionals who help individuals, families, and communities to achieve their optimal health. RNs deliver direct healthcare services and support clients in managing their own health, including preventing and treating injury and illness. RNs and NPs practice across the five domains of practice: clinical care, education, administration, research, and policy.

Where do registered nurses and nurse practitioners work?

Nurses work in a wide range of settings including: hospitals, health units, community clinics, retirement and nursing homes, long-term care facilities, workplaces, doctors' offices, correctional facilities, work sites, and private homes.

Education and preparation

Registered nurses must complete a 4-year BScN program from an

accredited post-secondary program and pass the national licensing exam. Nurse practitioners must complete a Master of Nursing program in Advanced Nursing Practice and pass the NP registration exam for their stream of practice.

Licensure

Provincial governments mandate that nursing regulatory bodies regulate themselves and ensure the profession remains accountable to the public and to governments. A registered nurse in Alberta must have a practice permit from the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA). The requirements to obtain this practice permit are variable depending on whether the individual completed their nursing education within Alberta, elsewhere in Canada, or internationally. Nurse practitioners in Alberta must also hold current registration with CARNA.

Professional organizations

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA)
<http://www.nurses.ab.ca>

Canadian Nurses Association
<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en>

Contributors to this guide

Canadian Nurses Association
<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en>

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA)
<http://www.nurses.ab.ca>

Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice, Western University Canada
<https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/education/ipe/index.html>



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