

Quick Guides to the Health Professions

Pharmacists

What is a pharmacist?

A pharmacist is a regulated healthcare professional. Pharmacists have a wide range of knowledge and skills that are used to fulfil various roles in different healthcare settings.

What do pharmacists do?

Pharmacists are the medication management experts of the healthcare team and help optimize drug therapy for patients with acute and/or chronic conditions. They assess the effectiveness and safety of, as well as patients' ability to adhere to, drug therapies and resolve problems to meet their therapeutic goals. They also educate the public and healthcare teams about medications. Pharmacists in Alberta are able to prescribe medications and adapt prescriptions written by other prescribers to improve outcomes or provide continuity of drug therapy. They can also initiate, maintain, or modify a patient's drug therapy as part of the collaborative healthcare team. Pharmacists review laboratory and diagnostic tests and are able to order laboratory tests and conduct point of care testing relevant to their patients' care.

Pharmacists manage the dispensing of medications in a pharmacy, including compounding medications into specialized dosage forms. They also administer drugs by injection, administer vaccines, provide drug information to patients and other healthcare professionals, and promote health through wellness screening and prevention programs. They can also be involved in other professional activities such as teaching and mentoring, conducting research, and developing regulatory and health policy.

Where do pharmacists work?

Pharmacists work in various settings including community pharmacies, hospitals, ambulatory clinics, primary care networks, government, regulatory bodies, professional associations, academia, consulting, and pharmaceutical companies.

Education and preparation

Students complete at least two years of pre-professional university education before admission to the four-year Doctor of Pharmacy professional program. Pharmacists may also engage in further training, such as an Accredited Canadian Pharmacy Residency program. Practicing pharmacists may also complete the PharmD for Practicing Pharmacists post-professional degree program for advanced education in patient care.

Licensure

Pharmacists in Alberta must register with the Alberta College of Pharmacy. This requires completion of a post-graduate internship and passing the national and provincial qualifying exams.

Professional organizations

Alberta College of Pharmacists
<https://pharmacists.ab.ca>

Canadian Pharmacists' Association
<http://www.pharmacists.ca>

Alberta Pharmacists' Association
<https://www.rxa.ca/>

Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists
<https://www.cshp.ca/>
Alberta Branch: <https://www.cshp.ca/alberta>

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