

Respiratory Therapists

SOC: 29-1126 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$80,450

Median Salary

139,600

Employment

+12.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Associate's degree

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 8.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■■ Work-Life Balance

7.1/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.4/10	Investigative	8.6/10
Artistic	4.8/10	Social	9.0/10
Enterprising	5.4/10	Conventional	6.2/10

■ Top Skills Required

Compassion, Detail oriented, Interpersonal skills, Patience, Problem-solving skills

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Respiratory Therapists evaluate, treat, and care for patients with **breathing or cardiopulmonary disorders**. They provide therapy, manage ventilators, and educate patients on respiratory care. Their work is critical in hospitals, clinics, and emergency care settings. This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy healthcare, patient care, and working in fast-paced medical environments.

What Do Respiratory Therapists Do?

These professionals assess patients' respiratory conditions, develop treatment plans, and provide therapeutic interventions.

Common responsibilities include:

- Evaluating patient breathing, oxygen levels, and lung function
- Administering respiratory therapy, including oxygen, nebulizers, and ventilators
- Monitoring patients on mechanical ventilation or with critical respiratory conditions
- Educating patients and families on respiratory care and disease management
- Recording patient progress and maintaining medical records
- Collaborating with physicians, nurses, and other healthcare staff
- Responding to emergency situations and providing life-saving interventions

Key Areas of Respiratory Therapy

Therapists may specialize in particular patient populations or treatment methods:

- Acute and Critical Care: Treating patients in ICUs or emergency situations
- Pulmonary Rehabilitation: Managing chronic respiratory conditions
- Neonatal and Pediatric Therapy: Caring for infants and children with respiratory issues
- Patient Education and Home Care: Teaching patients to manage conditions and use respiratory equipment
- Diagnostics and Testing: Conducting pulmonary function tests and analyzing results

Skills and Abilities Needed

Respiratory therapists combine clinical knowledge, technical skills, and patient care abilities.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires formal education and licensure:

- Associate's or Bachelor's Degree: Respiratory therapy or related healthcare program
- Clinical Internship or Practicum: Hands-on experience in hospitals or healthcare settings
- Licensure or Certification: Required to practice as a respiratory therapist (e.g., CRT or RRT credentials)
- Continuing Education: Maintaining licensure and staying current on techniques and equipment
- Specialty Certifications (optional): Areas such as neonatal, pediatric, or critical care

Where Do Respiratory Therapists Work?

They are employed in healthcare settings providing patient respiratory care:

- Hospitals and Intensive Care Units
- Clinics and Physician Offices
- Long-Term Care and Rehabilitation Facilities
- Home Healthcare Services
- Emergency Medical Services

Work environments include patient rooms, ICUs, clinics, and emergency care areas.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires medical knowledge, technical proficiency, and strong interpersonal skills. Respiratory therapists must respond to emergencies, manage complex equipment, and provide accurate patient care.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy healthcare and helping patients with breathing or cardiopulmonary issues
- Are detail-oriented and able to work under pressure
- Have strong communication and critical thinking skills
- Can operate technical medical equipment safely
- Want a career improving patient health and quality of life

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in biology, anatomy, and health sciences
- Volunteer or intern in healthcare or respiratory care settings
- Develop skills in patient care, equipment use, and emergency response
- Explore accredited respiratory therapy programs
- Gain clinical experience through internships or supervised practice

Respiratory therapists provide essential care for patients with breathing and cardiopulmonary disorders, applying therapy, education, and technical expertise to improve health and quality of life.