Overview

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), or Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) as they are called in Texas and California, care for the sick, injured, convalescent, and disabled in a variety of healthcare settings.

LPNs/LVNs provide hands-on care to patients under the supervision of RNs or physicians. LPN preparation programs involve one year of training at a hospital, vocational-tech school, or community college. After training, you are eligible for licensure as an LPN or LVN, and you will then be qualified to work at a hospital. Responsibilities of LPNs are limited, however, and you must work under the guidance and direction of a registered nurse or physician.

Most LPNs provide basic bedside care. They take vital signs such as temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and respiration. They also treat bedsores, prepare and give injections and enemas, apply dressings, give alcohol rubs and massages, apply ice packs and hot water bottles, and monitor catheters.

LPNs observe patients and report adverse reactions to medications or treatments. They collect samples for testing, perform routine laboratory tests, feed patients, and record food and fluid intake and output. They help patients with bathing, dressing, and personal hygiene, keep them comfortable, and care for their emotional needs. In states where the law allows, they may administer prescribed medicines or start intravenous fluids.

Some LPNs help deliver, care for, and feed infants. Experienced LPNs may supervise nursing assistants and aides. To learn more, watch the video profile of "Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses."

Working Conditions

Most licensed practical nurses in hospitals and nursing homes work a 40-hour week, but because patients need around-the-clock care, some work nights, weekends, and holidays. They often stand for long periods and help patients move in bed, stand, or walk.

Academic Requirements

All States and the District of Columbia require LPNs to pass a licensing examination after completing a state-approved practical nursing program. A high school diploma, or the equivalent, usually is required for entry, although some programs accept candidates without a diploma; also, some programs are designed as part of a high school curriculum. Search for schools that provide training for this career.

For an overview of the various academic programs available for students hoping to pursue a career in nursing, read this report, visit the AACN Website, and/or:

- AllNursingSchools.com
- American Nurses Association
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing
This material has been reviewed and approved by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

Professional Associations
- National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service, Inc.
- American Nurses Association

Funding Opportunities
- Search for funding opportunities in this field

Enrichment Programs
- Search for enrichment programs in this field

Schools and Academic Programs
- Search for academic degree and certificate programs in this field

Source
- nursingworld.org (American Nurses Association)

Learn more about this field:
- Nursing