



PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Pharmacy Technicians help licensed pharmacists dispense prescription medication to customers or health professionals. They work in retail pharmacies and hospitals.

DUTIES

Pharmacy technicians typically do the following:

- Take the information needed to fill a prescription from customers or health professionals
- Measure amounts of medication for prescriptions
- Package and label prescriptions
- Organize inventory and alert pharmacists to any shortages of medications or supplies
- Accept payment for prescriptions and process insurance claims
- Enter customer or patient information, including any prescriptions taken, into a computer system
- Answer phone calls from customers
- Arrange for customers to speak with pharmacists if customers have questions about medications or health matters

Pharmacy technicians work under the supervision of [pharmacists](#), who must review prescriptions before they are given to patients. In most states, technicians can compound or mix some medications and call physicians for prescription refill authorizations. Technicians also may need to operate automated dispensing equipment when filling prescription orders.

Pharmacy technicians working in hospitals and other medical facilities prepare a greater variety of medications, such as intravenous medications. They may make rounds in the hospital, giving medications to patients

IMPORTANT QUALITIES

- **Customer-service skills.** Pharmacy technicians spend much of their time interacting with customers, so being helpful and polite are required of pharmacy technicians in a retail setting.
- **Detail oriented.** Serious health problems can result from mistakes in filling prescriptions. Although the pharmacist is responsible for ensuring the safety of all medications dispensed, pharmacy technicians should be detail oriented so that complications are avoided.
- **Listening skills.** Pharmacy technicians must communicate clearly with pharmacists and doctors when taking prescription orders. When speaking with customers, technicians must listen carefully to understand customers' needs and determine if they need to speak with a pharmacist.
- **Math skills.** Pharmacy technicians need to have an understanding of the math concepts used in pharmacies when counting pills and compounding medications.
- **Organizational skills.** Working as a pharmacy technician involves balancing a variety of responsibilities. Pharmacy technicians need good organizational skills to complete the work delegated by pharmacists while at the same time providing service to customers or patients

EDUCATION

The PHCC Pharmacy Technician program is a 2 semester sequence that begins in the fall semester and ends in spring semester. The program cannot be taken out of sequence. Graduates receive a career studies certificate from PHCC and are eligible to apply to take the Virginia Pharmacy Technician examination.

www.smttest.com/vapt/

Related Schools

- Patrick Henry Community College
- A full listing of approved pharmacy technician programs in Virginia can be found at: <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy/ptprograms>

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION

Most states regulate pharmacy technicians in some way. Consult the Virginia State Board of Pharmacy www.dhp.virginia.gov/Pharmacy for its particular regulation. Requirements for pharmacy technicians typically include some or all of the following:

- High school diploma or GED
- Criminal background check
- Drug screen
- Formal training program
- Exam
- Fees
- Continuing education

WORKING CONDITIONS

Pharmacy technicians held about 355,300 jobs in 2012. They worked primarily in pharmacies, including those found in grocery and drug stores. Some technicians work in hospitals or clinics. Pharmacy technicians spend most of the workday on their feet. Most pharmacy technicians work full time. Pharmacies may be open at all hours. Therefore, pharmacy technicians may have to work nights or weekends.

The industries that employed the most pharmacy technicians in 2012 were as follows:

Pharmacies and drug stores	53%
Hospitals; state, local, and private	17%
General merchandise stores	12%
Grocery stores	7%
Ambulatory health care services	3%

JOB OUTLOOK

Employment of pharmacy technicians is projected to grow 20 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. Several factors will lead to increased demand for prescription medications:

- The population is aging, and older people typically use more prescription medicines than younger people.
- Higher rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes among all age groups also will lead to increased demand for prescription medications.
- Advances in pharmaceutical research will allow for more prescription medications to be used to fight diseases.
- The number of individuals who have health insurance will increase due to federal health insurance reform legislation. As more people have access to insurance coverage, more pharmacy technicians will be needed to handle their prescriptions.

In addition, pharmacy technicians may be needed to take on a greater role in pharmacy operations because pharmacists are increasingly performing more patient care activities such as giving flu shots. Technicians will need to perform tasks such as collecting patient information, preparing more types of medications, and verifying the work of other technicians, tasks formerly done by pharmacists.

AVERAGE SALARY

The median annual wage for pharmacy technicians was \$29,320 in May 2012. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$20,580, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$42,400.

In May 2012, the median annual wages for pharmacy technicians in the top five industries in which these technicians worked were as follows:

Ambulatory health care services	\$35,470
Hospitals	\$33,550
Grocery stores	\$28,760
Pharmacies and drug stores	\$28,030
Other general merchandise stores	\$27,450

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

National Pharmacy Technician Association (NPTA)

<http://www.pharmacytechnician.org/>

Virginia Board of Pharmacy

Perimeter Center

9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 300

Henrico, VA 23233-1463

Phone: (804)367-4456

Fax: (804)527-4472

<http://dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy>

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Pharmacy Technicians, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm> (visited July 20, 2015).