

# Theatre nurse

Theatre nurses work with patients of all ages and are involved in each phase of a person's operation.

This page has information on being a theatre nurse and links to further information.

## Working life

You'll provide high standards of skilled care and support during each phase of a patient's [perioperative](#) <sup>[1]</sup> care.



[Perioperative](#) <sup>[1]</sup> care can be divided into four phases:

- preoperative (pre-assessment)
- anaesthetics
- surgical phase
- recovery phase

Theatre nurses can also specialise in a specific area such of perioperative care or rotate through the areas.

Theatre nurses can also specialise in a specific area such of [perioperative](#) [1] care or rotate through the areas. Rotation is more likely to happen in day surgery.

## **Preoperative phase**

During the preoperative assessment, you'll make sure a patient is fully informed about the risks and benefits of the operation and that that they are in a good state of health for surgery. You'll provide information about the operation and give the patient the opportunity to ask questions. This also reduces the risk of a late cancellation and resources being wasted.

## **Anaesthetic phase**

During this phase, you'll primarily support the anaesthetist but also prepare any specialist equipment, devices and drugs. You'll also assess the patient immediately prior to the surgery.

## **Surgical phase**

You'll be responsible for a number of roles during the surgical phase including:

- preparing all the necessary complex instruments and equipment including microscopes, lasers and endoscopes
- working with the surgeon to provide instruments, needles, swabs and other materials as required
- responsibility for the surgical instruments, equipment and swabs
- act as a link between the surgical team and other parts of the theatre and hospital.

## **Recovery phase**

Following the operation, you'll:

- offer the patient care and support upon arrival on the post anaesthetic care unit
- monitor the patient's health
- providing appropriate care and treatment until the patient has recovered from the effects of the anaesthesia and/or surgery
- assess the patient to ensure they can be discharged back to a ward
- assess the care given during each of the [perioperative](#) [1] phases

## **Where will I work?**

You'll work primarily within hospital operating theatres and anaesthetic/recovery areas. You may also be involved with procedures on wards, clinics or in other specialist areas such as cardiac catheterisation units. You'll work as part of a large team that will include [surgeons](#) [2], [anaesthetists](#), [3] [operating department practitioner \(ODPs\)](#) [4], [theatre support workers](#) [5] and [porters](#) [6].

You may also work with healthcare scientists such as [audiologists](#) [7] or [cardiac physiologists](#) [8] when fitting cochlear implants or pacemakers.

## Entry requirements

You'll need to be a registered [adult](#) [9], [child](#) [10], [mental health](#) [11] or [learning disability nurse](#) [12] to work as a theatre nurse. After a period of induction you will undertake specialist training including courses to consolidate the specialist skills you'll require to work in theatre.

## Want to learn more?

- [Find out out the skills and personal characteristics needed for a career in theatre nursing](#) [13]
- [Find out more about the courses available is on our training and development information for theatre nurses](#) [14]

- [Pay and conditions](#) Expand / Collapse

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\) pay scales](#) [15]. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. Theatre nurses in the NHS will usually start at band 5 and work standard hours of 37.5 per week. Terms and conditions will vary for any jobs outside of the NHS

- [Where the role can lead](#) Expand / Collapse

There are several routes for theatre nurses to further their careers including management, education and [research](#) [16]. You could also undertake further training to become a surgical care practitioner.

[More information on training and development in theatre nursing.](#) [14]

- [Job market and vacancies](#) Expand / Collapse

Most NHS organisations advertise their job and apprenticeship vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [17], including those who run NHS services. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations at NHS Choices. Vacancies for theatre nurses not employed directly by the NHS can be usually be found in the nursing press and on recruitment websites.

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the values of the [NHS Constitution](#) [18] apply in your everyday work. [Find out more about NHS values.](#) [19]

- [Further information](#) Expand / Collapse

- [The Association for Perioperative Practice](#) [20]
- [Faculty of Perioperative Care](#) [21] (at The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh)
- [Royal College of Nursing](#) [22]
- [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#) [23]

## Other roles that may interest you

- [Operating department practitioner](#) [24]
- [General surgery](#) [25]
- [Theatre support worker](#) [26]
- [Anaesthesia](#) [27]

## Partner logos



**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/theatre-nurse>

### Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Perioperative>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/anaesthesia>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/operating-department-practice>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/theatre-support-worker>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/support-services/porter>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/audiology>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/cardiac-sciences>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/adult-nurse>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/childrens-nurse>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/mental-health-nurse>
- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/learning-disability-nurse>
- [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/theatre-nurse/personal-characteristics-and-skills-required-theatre-nursing>
- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/theatre-nurse/training-and-development-theatre-nursing>
- [15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/clinical-academic-careers>
- [17] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [18] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS\\_Constitution](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS_Constitution)
- [19] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [20] <http://www.afpp.org.uk/home>
- [21] <https://fpc.rcsed.ac.uk>
- [22] <http://www.rcn.org.uk/>
- [23] <http://www.nmc.org.uk/>
- [24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/operating-department-practitioner>
- [25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery>
- [26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/Explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/theatre-support-worker>
- [27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/anaesthesia>

[28] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/>