

# Pharmacy technician

Pharmacy technicians manage the supply of medicines in a community pharmacy and assist pharmacists with advisory services. In hospitals, they do more specialised work such as manufacturing or preparing complex medicines.

## Working life

Pharmacy technicians are part of the pharmacy team, preparing and dispensing medicines. Pharmacies are where medicines are stored, prepared and dispensed.



Medicines are the most common treatments offered to NHS patients. Pharmacy technicians work as part of a pharmacy team under the direction of a registered pharmacist [1]. The work includes:

- taking in and handing out prescriptions
- dispensing prescriptions
- using computer systems to generate stock lists and labels

- ordering items
- receiving, loading, unloading deliveries
- delivering medicines to other parts of a hospital or health centre
- selling over-the-counter medicines
- answering customers questions face to face or by phone
- pre-packing, assembling and labelling medicines
- preparing medicines
- referring problems or queries to the pharmacist

Pharmacy technicians can also be involved in manufacturing medicines when ready-made preparations are not available. For example, certain cancer treatments and intravenous feeding solutions need to be tailor made under sterile conditions for individual patients.



Pharmacy technicians work as part of healthcare teams in hospitals or community pharmacies. Some work in retail pharmacies in supermarkets or on the high street, or for other employers that provide NHS services. In community pharmacies they may be called dispensing assistants.

## Entry requirements

To practise as a pharmacy technician, you have to be registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). To register, you need to study for an accredited qualification such as:

- BTEC National Diploma in pharmaceutical science
- NVQ/SVQ level 3 in pharmacy services
- National Certificate in pharmaceutical science

To apply for a course, you need to be working in a pharmacy. Employers, including the NHS, offer jobs for trainee pharmacy technicians (or dispensing assistants). [Find courses on our course finder.](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

Employers usually ask for at least 4 GCSEs (A-C), including English, maths and science or equivalent qualifications. It will help your application if you can show that you have an understanding of pharmacy and how it benefits patients. It is a good idea to spend some time with a registered pharmacist to see what the work is like.

Training to become a pharmacy technician usually takes two years

## Skills and personal characteristics

Pharmacy technicians need to be:

- accurate and methodical
- responsible
- able to pay attention to detail
- ready to refer to the pharmacist when necessary
- able to understand law and guidelines on medicines
- able to read and carry out instructions
- interested in people's health
- willing to work with all types of people
- able to explain clearly to members of the public
- communication skills including listening
- good customer skills
- science skills
- good manual (hand) skills
- IT skills
- organisation skills

## Training and development

Training to become a pharmacy technician usually takes two years. It combines practical work experience with study, either at college or by distance learning. Courses cover:

- human [physiology](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- disease management
- actions and uses of medicine pharmacy manufacturing
- pharmacy law

In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacy technicians must be registered with the [General Pharmaceutical Council \(GPhC\)](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and have satisfied the Council that it meets its detailed requirements. Registered pharmacy technicians have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date with annual continuing professional development (CPD). [Find out more about CPD](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

Once qualified, many pharmacy technicians join the [Association of Pharmacy Technicians](#) <sup>[6]</sup> (APTUK). The APTUK runs courses, conferences and seminars where pharmacy technicians can exchange ideas and update their skills.

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

Pharmacy technicians working in the NHS will work standard hours of around 37.5 a week which may include shifts. Newly qualified pharmacy technicians will usually start in the NHS at band 4 of the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) [7] pay scale.

[Find out more about the pay and benefits of a career in the NHS](#) [8]. [9]

Terms and conditions can vary for pharmacists outside of the NHS, including those working in high street and retail pharmacies, or for other employers that provide NHS services.

- **Where the role can lead Expand / Collapse**  
With experience, you could specialise in a particular area of practice such as mental health, [oncology](#) [10] (cancer treatment) or paediatrics. Or you could specialise in areas such as medicines management, manufacturing, quality control, education and training, information technology, supplies procurement, clinical trials or medicine information services.

You could become a senior pharmacy technician, responsible for the work of other technicians. A chief pharmacy technician is responsible for the day-to-day management of a pharmacy department.

- **Job market and vacancies Expand / Collapse**  
Recent figures show that pharmacy technician training places are on the increase with 363 commissioned places, an increase of 21% on the previous year.

NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [11] and some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations on the [NHS Choices](#) [12] website.

Large retail pharmacies, including those in supermarkets, usually advertise for trainees on their own websites. From time to time, individual high street pharmacies may also advertise locally for trainees.

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 NHS values apply in your everyday work.

[Find out more about NHS values.](#) [13]

- **Further information Expand / Collapse**
  - [General Pharmaceutical Council](#) [14]
  - [The Association of Pharmacy Technicians](#) [15]
  - [National Pharmacy Association](#) [16]

## Other roles that may interest you

- [Pharmacy assistant](#) [17]
- [Pharmacist](#) [18]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [19]

- Patient Transport Service PTS call handler [20]
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### Links

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- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/looking-course>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology>
- [4] <http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/registration>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/professional-development>
- [6] <http://www.aptuk.org/>
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