

Phlebotomist

Phlebotomists collect blood samples from patients to help diagnose illness. Find out how you could train as a phlebotomist.

This page has information on the role of the phlebotomist, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

As a phlebotomist, you will take blood samples from patients. The samples are examined in a laboratory and the results can be used to diagnose diseases and conditions.



When taking blood, you have to be careful that you

- don't harm the patient
- don't disturb any nursing care that the patient is receiving
- take the blood correctly so it can be used for testing

- label the samples carefully
- store the blood correctly
- deliver the samples promptly to the lab

Patients may be nervous about having their blood taken, so you have to reassure them and put them at ease.



Phlebotomists may work in hospitals, clinics or health centres. You may visit patients at home or in residential or care homes.

Depending on where you're based, you will work as part of a team with nurses [1], healthcare science staff working in blood sciences [2], biomedical scientists [3], GPs [4] and other healthcare staff. You may work as a healthcare assistant [5], and then receive training in phlebotomy so that you can take patient's blood.

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements to become a trainee phlebotomist. Employers usually ask for at least two GCSEs or equivalent. They may ask for a BTEC or equivalent vocational qualification in health and social care or healthcare.

Employers often ask for relevant work experience. Even where this is not specified, it would be an advantage if you have worked in health or social care, in either paid or voluntary work. There are apprenticeships [6] in healthcare that would give you relevant experience to apply for a trainee phlebotomist position. You could work as a healthcare assistant [5], and then receive training in phlebotomy so that you can take patient's blood.

Skills and personal characteristics needed

As a phlebotomist, you'll need:

Patients may be nervous about having their blood taken, so you have to reassure them and put them at ease.

- to be caring and kind
- willing to be hands-on with patients
- to be able to put patients at ease - they might feel anxious about giving blood

- able to follow instructions and procedures
- able to work in a team but use your own initiative
- able to explain procedures to patients, careful and methodical

You'll also need:

- good communication skills
- including listening skills
- good organisational and observational skills

Training and development

Phlebotomists are trained on the job and so securing a trainee phlebotomist position is recommended.

The training includes theory and practical work including

- how to take blood from different patient groups, including children and the elderly
- different ways to take blood
- health and safety
- anatomy and [physiology](#) [7]
- labelling samples

If you take a freestanding course in phlebotomy before applying for a job as a phlebotomist, there is no guarantee of a position within the NHS.

Phlebotomists can become members of the [National Association of Phlebotomists](#) [8] (NAP) or associate members of the [Institute of Biomedical Science](#) [9] (IBMS). Both NAP and IBMS offer training and conferences where phlebotomists can network with others doing similar work.

- Pay and conditions [Expand / Collapse](#)
Clinical support staff working in the NHS are paid on the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) [10] pay system. As a phlebotomist, you will typically start on [AfC](#) [11] band 2 or 3. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at band 4. In the NHS, phlebotomists work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They often work shifts, which could involve nights, early starts, evenings and weekends.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for phlebotomists working outside of the NHS.

- Where the role can lead [Expand / Collapse](#)
With experience and further training, you could become a senior phlebotomist taking on more advanced work. You could become a team leader, supervising the work of a team of phlebotomists.

With further training, experience and qualifications, you could apply to train as a science or healthcare professional such as a [nurse](#) [1], [biomedical scientist](#) [3] or healthcare science practitioner.

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

Most NHS trusts advertise vacancies on the [NHS Jobs website](#) [12], for trainee positions, as well as for qualified phlebotomists. Vacancies are also advertised in the local press and job centres. Additionally, you can contact the human resources department officer or head biomedical scientist at a hospital where you would like to work.

Important: as training is usually undertaken whilst you are working, you should aim to secure a post before seeking training in phlebotomy.

- Further information Expand / Collapse
 - [National Association of Phlebotomists](#) [13]
 - [Institute of Biomedical Science](#) [9]

NB Neither the National Association of Phlebotomists, nor the Institute of Biomedical Science, train phlebotomists and therefore cannot provide details of initial phlebotomy courses. You should aim to secure a post before seeking training in phlebotomy.

Other roles that may interest you

- [Healthcare assistant](#) [14]
- [Blood sciences](#) [15]
- [Biomedical science](#) [16]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [17]

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Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/blood-sciences>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/biomedical-science>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/general-practice-gp>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-assistant>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology>
- [8] <http://www.phlebotomy.org/>
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