

# Pharmacist

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## Career Description:

Pharmacists dispense drugs prescribed by doctors, dentists, veterinarians, and other health care providers. They advise providers and patients on dosages, interactions, and side effects of medication. They must understand the chemical, biological, and physical properties of drugs, including their use, composition, and clinical effects.

The specific duties of a pharmacist vary according to place of practice. Over half of the licensed pharmacists practicing today are community pharmacists who fill prescriptions, advise on treatment regimens, and run businesses. Hospital pharmacists provide patients with accurate drug dosages, educate the medical staff on the use and effects of medications, monitor patients' progress, and make changes in treatment as needed.

Pharmacists may also work in clinics, on-line pharmacies, the pharmaceutical industry, government agencies, and academic settings. Some enter the field of pharmacology to study the effects of drugs on humans and animals. A pharmacology degree does not prepare graduates to practice pharmacy.

New opportunities will emerge for pharmacists in pharmacoeconomics, the cost and benefit analysis of drug therapies; research and disease management; and pharmacy informatics, which uses information technology to improve patient care.

Most pharmacists work 40 hours a week. Some, including many self-employed pharmacists, work more than 50 hours a week. Nearly one out of every seven pharmacist works part-time.

The field is expected to grow at a faster than average rate. Nursing homes, home care, and assisted-living facilities will hire more pharmacists to handle the prescription needs of the growing elderly population.

## Academic Requirements:

A license, required to practice pharmacy in all states, is achieved by graduating from an accredited program, passing a state examination, and completing an internship in the field. Eighty-nine institutions award the PharmD degree (Doctor of Pharmacy). These programs require six years of postsecondary education: at least two years of college, though most applicants have at least three, and four years to complete the PharmD. Pharmacists may complete an advanced master's or doctoral degree to pursue research or academic positions. Some complete a residency in a specialized area or pursue a master's degree in business (MBA) or public (MPA) administration, or a master's in public health (MPH). Students interested in pursuing a PharmD should complete college coursework in chemistry, biology, physics, and math, as well as in the humanities and the social sciences.

## Salary:

\$84,900 median

## Resources:

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
Pharmacy School Admission Requirements  
American Society of Health System Pharmacists  
Pharmacy College Application Service