

Name _____ Date _____

Nursing - Learn about this rewarding career!

Have you ever thought about becoming a nurse? I planned to become a doctor from a very young age, but as I grew older, I changed my mind and decided to become a Registered Nurse. It is an excellent career choice to become a physician, but being a nurse is also very rewarding.

I have been a Registered Nurse for ten years now, and have worked in a variety of nursing specialties. I've worked as an Adolescent Psychiatric nurse in a state mental hospital, as a Home Health nurse caring for elderly patients in their own homes, as an Emergency Room nurse, and as a Medical-Surgical nurse. All of these specialties taught me many things, and each field was rewarding in its own way. As a nurse, one doesn't have to remain in one type of setting; one can choose from a wide variety of specialties.

One of the most rewarding aspects of working as a nurse is working very closely with patients and their families at a time when they need a compassionate and caring individual to help them deal with their illness. Nurses also teach patients and their loved ones about illnesses, how to prevent or lessen occurrences of health problems, and even help to find and utilize helpful community resources. Another very important role that nurses perform is that of a patient advocate. A patient advocate is someone who looks out for the patient's well being in every way possible. Many times, nurses become very close to their patients and families. Nurses help people every day, and it is a great feeling to know that you have helped someone, no matter how large or small your assistance may have been.

There are different levels of educational requirements for different types of nurses. A Licensed Practical Nurse, or LPN, usually attends school for about one year to become eligible to take the licensure exam. A Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing requires an additional year of education, and there are many educational opportunities for Nurse Practitioners. A Nurse Practitioner is a nurse that is able to perform most of the same skills as a physician.

Another very important member of the nursing profession is the Certified Nursing Assistant, CNAs, as they are often called, are many times the closest member of the health care team to the patient. They perform many personal care duties, such as bathing, shaving, or shampooing a patient. They also take vital signs, which includes checking the patient's temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate, and respiration rate. The pulse rate is how many times the patient's heart beats per minute. The respiration rate means how many times the patient breathes per minute. All of these vital signs are extremely important in patient care - they alert the nurses and doctors to a possible emergency, or a worsening condition. Certified Nursing Assistants generally attend training for approximately six months, although that varies from state to state.

As our country's population ages, and there are more and more elderly patients in need of professional care, there will be an ever-increasing demand for nurses in the United States. If you want to become a nurse, you should concentrate on Math and Science courses throughout high school, especially Biology and Anatomy and Physiology. Spanish language knowledge is also very helpful in the nursing field, as the Spanish-speaking population grows ever larger. It is very difficult to accurately treat a sick patient when you cannot speak or comprehend their language. If you are interested in a career where helping people comes first, I would urge you to consider nursing as a career - it has certainly enriched my life.