START the BAG

Future Skill #3

Careers in clinical healthcare

Future Skill #3: nursing, paramedic work, allied health, dental and medical equipment repair.

Free Career Guide · startthebag.com/guide-healthcare.html
Last checked 26 October 2026 · Pay figures are medians from official sources, never a promise.

Careers in clinical healthcare

Jobs where people need a person. Here are the main routes into nursing, emergency care, allied health and health tech, what they pay, and what you can start at 13 to 17.

In 30 seconds

- → Healthcare is projected to make about **37% of new US jobs** to 2035 [1].
- → Hands-on care is hard to automate: AI and robot risk are both rated **low**.
- → US registered nurses earn a median of **US$97,550** [2]. Newly qualified NHS nurses start on **£32,073** [13].
- → You can **earn while you train**: nursing assistant courses in the US, nursing apprenticeships in the UK, school-based traineeships in Australia.
- → Start now for free: **first aid**, a cadet group, or volunteering from about 15 or 16.

Five ways into healthcare

REGISTERED NURSE, PRACTICAL OR ENROLLED NURSE, NURSING ASSISTANT

Nursing

Caring for patients in hospitals, clinics, care homes and people's homes. The biggest healthcare workforce, with lots of ways in.

EMT, PARAMEDIC, AMBULANCE CREW

Paramedic and emergency care

First on the scene for 999, 911 and 000 calls. Fast decisions in places that are never the same twice.

PHYSIO, RADIOGRAPHER, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Allied health

Specialists who help people move, scan bodies, recover from injury and get the right medicines.

DENTAL HYGIENIST, DENTAL NURSE

Dental

Cleaning, checking and teaching people to look after their teeth. High pay for a short-ish training route in the US.

MEDICAL (BIOMEDICAL) EQUIPMENT REPAIRER

Health tech

Fixing the machines hospitals run on. Part tech, part healthcare, and growing fast in the US.

03 · WHY IT LASTS

Why these jobs last

SHARE OF NEW US JOBS

37%

Healthcare's share of projected job growth, 2025–35 [1]

FASTEST-GROWING US JOB

+41%

Nurse practitioners, 2025–35 [1]

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRERS

+13%

US growth 2025–35, much faster than average [9]

REGISTERED NURSES

+6%

US growth 2025–35, faster than average [2]

AI can help with paperwork and spotting patterns, but it can't calm a scared patient, lift someone safely or fix a scanner on a ward. That's why care, emergency and hands-on technical roles are rated low risk for both AI and robots.

04 · WHAT IT PAYS

What it pays, by country

Medians show what the middle earns. Trainees start lower. Each figure is in that country's own currency, with its source.

UNITED STATES

Registered nurses — **US$97,550**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [2]

Physical therapists — **US$102,760**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [10]

Dental hygienists — **US$98,100**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [6]

Radiologic technologists — **US$80,110**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [8]

Licensed practical nurses — **US$64,400**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [3]

Medical equipment repairers — **US$61,660**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [9]

Paramedics — **US$60,600**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [5]

Pharmacy technicians — **US$45,750**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [7]

EMTs — **US$44,470**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [5]

Nursing assistants — **US$42,260**

Median, May 2025 · BLS [4]

US medians for the whole job. Nursing assistants and EMTs are entry roles; nurses, hygienists and physios need longer training.

UNITED KINGDOM

Paramedics — **£52,875**

Full-time median, ONS ASHE 2026 provisional [12]

Physiotherapists — **£46,303**

Full-time median, ONS ASHE 2026 provisional [12]

Nurses — **£44,601**

Full-time median, ONS ASHE 2026 provisional [12]

Nursing auxiliaries and assistants — **£30,383**

Full-time median, ONS ASHE 2026 provisional [12]

NHS pay bands, England, from April 2026

Band 2 — **£25,272**

Typical for a new healthcare assistant

Band 3 — **£25,760 to £27,476**

Typical while training as a nursing associate

Band 4 — **£28,392 to £31,157**

Typical once registered as a nursing associate

Band 5 — **£32,073 to £39,043**

Newly qualified nurses, paramedics, physios, dental hygienists

NHS band ranges [13]. Dental hygienists usually start on Band 5 with specialists on Band 6 [14].

CANADA

Registered nurses — **C$43.27/hour**

National median · Job Bank [28]

Personal support workers — **C$24.00/hour**

National median · Job Bank [29]

Pay varies a lot by province. Check the Job Bank wage pages for where you live.

AUSTRALIA

Registered nurses **A$2,192/week**

Median weekly earnings, May 2025 · Jobs and Skills Australia [32]

No reliable figure on our site yet for other Australian health jobs. Check Jobs and Skills Australia for the job you want.

Your route, step by step

1

AT SCHOOL

Biology, chemistry and first aid

The science subjects most courses ask for.

2

FROM 14 TO 16

Cadets or volunteering

Real experience of caring for people.

3

16 TO 18

Entry job or traineeship

Nursing assistant, healthcare assistant, PSW or a school-based traineeship.

4

18+

Degree or degree apprenticeship

Nursing, paramedic science, physio, radiography or dental hygiene.

5

QUALIFIED

Register and specialise

With your country's regulator, then pick a specialty.

UNITED STATES

- ✓ **Nursing assistant (CNA):** a state-approved course of at least 75 hours, including 16 hours of supervised practice, then your state's competency exam [15] [4]. Minimum ages are set by each state.
- ✓ **Licensed practical nurse:** a certificate or diploma that usually takes about a year [3].
- ✓ **Registered nurse:** usually a bachelor's degree; an associate's degree or diploma can also qualify you for entry-level jobs [2].
- ✓ **EMT and paramedic:** a postsecondary course. States can set a minimum age for a licence [5].
- ✓ **Dental hygienist:** an associate's degree; programmes usually take 3 years [6]. **Radiologic technologist:** an associate's degree [8].
- ✓ **Medical equipment repairer:** an associate's degree or certificate in biomedical technology [9].

UNITED KINGDOM

- **Healthcare assistant:** an entry job on NHS Band 2 [13].
- **Nursing associate:** a two-year level 5 apprenticeship, usually paid on Band 3 while you train and Band 4 once you're registered with the NMC [19].
- **Registered nurse degree apprenticeship:** earn while you train. Most take four years, less if you're already a nursing associate [18]. Or take a university nursing degree.
- **Paramedic:** an HCPC-approved paramedic science degree, or a level 6 paramedic degree apprenticeship, usually for people already working for an ambulance service [20].
- **Physio and other allied health:** an HCPC-approved degree, or a degree apprenticeship you apply for through an employer [21].
- **T Level in Health (England):** a two-year course after GCSEs with at least 315 hours on placement [27].

CANADA

- **Personal support worker (Ontario):** a college programme of five months to a year. Some school boards offer PSW training that counts toward your high school diploma [30].
- **Registered nurse:** a nursing degree, then the NCLEX-RN exam and a licence from your province's regulator [31].
- **Practical nurse:** called an LPN or RPN depending on your province. Check your provincial nursing regulator for the course you need.
- **Check your province:** nursing and paramedic rules are set provincially.

AUSTRALIA

- **School-based traineeship (NSW):** a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance while you're at school, with at least 100 days of paid work and training [35].
- **Enrolled nurse:** a Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121) approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board, usually 18 months to 2 years full-time [33].
- **Registered nurse:** an approved Bachelor of Nursing, for example 3 years full-time, then registration [34].

06 · BY AGE

What you can do at your age

13–15

EXPLORE

- UK: St John Ambulance Cadets from 10 to 17, learning life-saving skills [22]. NHS Cadets from 14 [23].
- Australia: St John youth groups (not in every state) [36].
- US: HOSA health clubs in middle and high school [16]. Red Cross youth volunteering often starts at 13, depending on your area [17].
- Take biology and chemistry seriously, and get a first aid certificate.

16–17

GET EXPERIENCE

- UK: hospital work experience and volunteering often start at 16, with ward roles from 17 or 18 [25]. British Red Cross volunteering from 15 [24].
- UK: NHS Cadets Advanced (16 to 18) [23], or a Health T Level [27].
- Australia (NSW): a health school-based traineeship in Years 11 and 12 [35].
- US: EMT and nursing assistant courses often take 16 and 17 year olds. Check your state's age rules first.

18+

TRAIN

- UK: nursing associate or nursing degree apprenticeships [19] [18], or a university degree.
- Canada: a PSW certificate [30] or a nursing degree [31].
- Australia: a Diploma of Nursing [33] or a Bachelor of Nursing [34].
- US: an LPN certificate [3], an associate's degree in dental hygiene or radiography [6] [8], or a nursing degree [2].

Start free this year

STEP 1 · ANY AGE

Learn first aid

Join a St John Ambulance or Red Cross youth group where you live [22] [17], or ask your school about a first aid course.

STEP 2 · 14+

Join a cadet or health club

NHS Cadets (UK, free, 14 to 18) [23], HOSA (US) [16] or St John youth (Australia) [36].

STEP 3 · 15 TO 16+

Volunteer with people

A hospital, care home or charity. Most hospitals start at 16 [25]; some don't take under-16s at all [26].

The honest trade-offs

- **It's physical and it can hurt.** US healthcare and social assistance has a higher injury rate than construction: 3.4 vs 2.2 cases per 100 full-time workers [11].
- **Entry jobs pay less.** US nursing assistants earn a median of US$42,260 [4], less than half a registered nurse. The big pay comes after training.
- **Shifts.** Nights, weekends and holidays come with most hands-on jobs.
- **It's emotional.** You'll see people at their worst moments. Good teams and supervision matter.
- **Long training for the top roles.** Nurses, physios and paramedics usually need a degree or a degree apprenticeship.

Your next 12 months

1

MONTH 1

Pick two jobs to explore

From the five above. Read their routes for your country.

2

MONTHS 1–3

Learn first aid

A course or a youth group.

3

MONTHS 3–6

Join a cadet group or health club

NHS Cadets, HOSA or St John.

4

MONTHS 6–11

Get real experience

Volunteering or work experience when you're old enough. Talk to a nurse, paramedic or hygienist.

5

MONTH 12

Choose your route

Check the subjects and grades your chosen course or apprenticeship asks for.

Built on the 12-month plan from our Future Skills page.

Earn while you learn

Side hustles that build the same skills: patience, reliability and looking after people. Pay is a rough range, shown in your currency.

AGE 14+

Errands & shopping for older neighbors

$10–15 per hour rough range

People with mobility issues need help with shopping, prescriptions and post office runs.

Watch out: Keep every receipt and never use their card PIN. A parent knows the arrangement.

AGE 16+

Babysitting

$10–18 per hour rough range

Parents pay for peace of mind and stick with a sitter they trust.

Watch out: Most places set no legal minimum age, but child-safety groups commonly advise 16+ to be left in charge alone, and some US states and Canadian provinces publish guidelines. Get emergency contacts and allergy info every time. Get a lift home after dark.

AGE 14+

Tutoring younger students

$13–30 per hour rough range

Parents pay well for help in subjects you just aced. You remember exactly what the exam wants.

Watch out: A parent in the house for in-person lessons. Online lessons on a family account, never private messaging apps.

Stay safe

- **Only do what you're trained for.** Under 18s are kept out of some areas, like theatres, for good reason [25].
- **Expect checks.** Hospitals and care settings run background and vaccination checks, and need a parent's consent if you're under 18.
- **Protect your back.** Never lift a person without training and the right equipment.
- **Keep patients' details private.** Never post photos or stories about patients online.
- **Never pay for a "guaranteed job" course.** Use approved courses listed by your state, country or regulator.

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Facts come from our Future Skills research and these official sources, last checked 26 October 2026. Ages, rules and pay change: confirm with the course, hospital or regulator before you apply.