

# RESPIRATORY THERAPIST

## { JOB DESCRIPTION }

Assess, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders. Assume primary responsibility for all respiratory care modalities, including the supervision of respiratory therapy technicians. Initiate and conduct therapeutic procedures, maintain patient records, and select, assemble, check, and operate equipment.

## { SKILLS AND APTITUDES NEEDED }

- Detail oriented
- Sensitive to patients' physical and psychological needs
- Ability to follow instructions and work as part of a team
- Knowledge of chemical and physical principles
- Oral and written communications skills to teach patient care

Respiratory therapists evaluate, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders. To evaluate patients, therapists test the capacity of the lungs and analyze oxygen and carbon dioxide concentration. They also measure the patient's potential of hydrogen (pH), which indicates the acidity or alkalinity level of the blood. To measure lung capacity, therapists have patients breathe into an instrument that measures the volume and flow of oxygen during inhalation and exhalation. By comparing the reading with the norm for the patient's age, height, weight, and sex, respiratory therapists can determine whether lung deficiencies exist. To analyze oxygen, carbon dioxide, and pH levels, therapists draw an arterial blood sample, place it in a blood gas analyzer, and relay the results to a physician.

Respiratory therapists treat all types of patients, ranging from premature infants whose lungs are not fully developed, to elderly people whose lungs are diseased. These workers provide temporary relief to patients with chronic asthma or emphysema and emergency care for patients who suffered heart failure or a stroke or are victims of drowning or shock. Respiratory therapists most commonly use oxygen or oxygen mixtures, chest physiotherapy, and aerosol medications.

## { SOUTH PLAINS }

Avg. Wage  
**\$13.64**

Avg. Annual  
Job Openings  
**14**

Employment in  
1998 2008  
**182 292**

## { TEXAS }

Avg. Wage  
**\$15.41**

Avg. Annual  
Job Openings  
**415**

Employment in  
1998 2008  
**6,044 9,283**

## { U.S. EMPLOYMENT }

In 1998  
**86,449**

Female **59%**  
Minority **33%**

## HEALTH SERVICES CAREERS



### { PREFERRED EDUCATION }

- Associate degree or bachelor degree

### { LICENSE / CERTIFICATION }

- Texas Department of Health Respiratory Care Practitioner License
- Registered Respiratory Therapist Certification
- Certified Respiratory Therapist

### { REGIONAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS }

- **SOUTH PLAINS COLLEGE**-Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.), Respiratory Care

### { JOB SITES }

Hospitals	87%
Home health care services	4%
Misc. equipment rental	3%

### { FOR MORE INFORMATION }

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE  
11030 Ables Ln., Dallas, TX 75229-4593  
[www.aarc.org](http://www.aarc.org)

THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR RESPIRATORY CARE, INC.  
8310 Nieman Rd., Lenexa, KS 66214-1579  
[www.nbrc.org](http://www.nbrc.org)

COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE  
1248 Harwood Rd., Bedford, TX 76021-4244  
[www.coarc.com](http://www.coarc.com)