

Dose of Knowledge



CAREER PROFILE

Community Pharmacist^{1,2}

Who are they?

Community-based pharmacists make a daily difference in the lives of patients in their communities by leading a team of pharmacy technicians to provide traditional medication dispensing, high quality affordable access to clinical healthcare services, and close gaps in care, often in underserved areas.

Traditional medication dispensing services include a great deal of work. Pharmacists oversee their team to ensure the correct inventory is maintained, medications are prepared in a timely manner, and perform intensive checks to ensure the prescribed medication will not negatively impact the patient's medications and conditions. They collaborate with other healthcare professionals including physicians and nurses to recommend changes to medications to best support the needs of each patient.

On top of the traditional dispensing role, community pharmacists also perform many essential services. Data shows that more routine adult vaccinations were given in pharmacies than in any other healthcare setting. As trusted healthcare professionals, they also have a tremendous impact on health outcomes through patient outreach they perform to:

- Improve patient medication adherence through counseling and patient education on the importance of taking medications correctly.
- Improve chronic condition management by closing gaps between provider visits through educating patients on their condition.
- Ensure patients can afford medications through recommending appropriate cost saving options or a lower cost, highly effective alternative medication.
- Provide easy access to low-cost diagnostic tests and treatments for certain illnesses (in select states).

What do they do?

Community pharmacists typically:

- Fill prescriptions based on provider orders and verify the medication is appropriate against listed allergies, medical conditions, and other medications.
- Counsel patients on many items including proper medication usage, potential side effects, education on their medical conditions, and can recommend over-the-counter (OTC) products, when appropriate.
- Oversee a team to ensure proper inventory maintenance, timely delivery of medications and services, and proper maintenance of patient and pharmacy records.
- Responsible for personnel management including proper employee scheduling, hiring, training, and supporting development plans to grow their careers.
- Recommend and administer vaccinations.

- Complete impactful patient care services to increase patient adherence including addressing affordability issues, identifying barriers to compliance through meaningful conversations, and recommending resolutions to barriers which may include syncing all refills to a single date, providing delivery service, etc.
- Providing patient education services to improve their understanding of their conditions and how to monitor and manage them appropriately (including comprehensive medication review or CMR).
- Provide access to testing and treatment in a timely manner (when allowed by regulations).

How do I become one?

Pharmacists typically need a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree from an accredited pharmacy program. Every state requires pharmacists to be licensed, although licensure requirements vary.

After completing the degree, prospective pharmacists typically must pass two exams to get a license. The North American Pharmacist Licensure Exam (NAPLEX) tests pharmacy skills and knowledge and is required in all states. The Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Exam (MPJE) or state-specific test on pharmacy law is also required. Applicants also must complete a state-specified number of hours as an intern. To maintain licensure, pharmacists must complete continuing education.

Job Outlook

- Employment of all pharmacists is projected to grow 3% from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations.
- About 13,400 openings for pharmacists are projected each year, on average.

Salary Range

- The typical pay range for this role is: \$65.40 per hour.
- The median annual wage for medical and health services managers was \$136,030 in May 2023.
- The lowest 10% earned less than \$89,980, and the highest 10% earned more than \$168,650.

Education/Training

Pharmacists typically need a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree from an accredited pharmacy program.

Pharm.D. programs typically require applicants to have at least two years of prerequisite undergraduate courses in subjects such as anatomy and physiology, physics, and statistics.

Some Pharm.D. programs require or prefer that applicants have a bachelor's degree in biology, healthcare, or a related field, or a physical science field, such as chemistry.

Pharm.D. programs usually take four years to finish, although some programs may offer different options. Pharm.D. programs include courses in sciences, pharmacology, and pharmacy law. Students also complete supervised work experience, sometimes called internships, in settings like hospitals and retail pharmacies.

1 <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacists.htm>

2 <https://jobs.cvshealth.com>