Respiratory therapists evaluate, treat, and care for patients with breathing or other cardiopulmonary disorders. Respiratory therapists practice under the direction of a physician and assume primary responsibility for all respiratory care therapeutic treatments and diagnostic procedures.

Respiratory therapists evaluate patients by interviewing them, performing limited physical examinations, and conducting diagnostic tests. They treat patients with oxygen or oxygen mixtures, chest physiotherapy, and aerosol medications. They teach patients how to inhale the aerosol properly to ensure its effectiveness. Therapists also connect patients who cannot breathe on their own to ventilators. Therapists perform regular assessments of patients and equipment. Respiratory therapists also perform chest physiotherapy on patients to remove mucus from their lungs and make it easier for them to breathe.

In some hospitals, therapists perform tasks that fall outside their traditional role. They may be involved in areas such as pulmonary rehabilitation, smoking cessation counseling, disease prevention, case management, and polysomnography (the diagnosis of breathing disorders during sleep, such as apnea). Respiratory therapists also increasingly treat critical care patients, either as part of surface and air transport teams or as part of rapid-response teams in hospitals.

An associate degree is the minimum educational requirement, but a bachelor's or master's degree may be important for advancement.

## Lower Division Subjects Required by Most U.S. Respiratory Therapy Schools

| **Required Subject** | **Course** |
| --- | --- |
| One semester of English Composition | English 101 |
| One semester of Chemistry | Chemistry 60 |
| One semester of Anatomy | Anatomy 1 |
| One semester of Physiology | Physiology 1 |
| One semester of Microbiology | Microbiology 1 or 20 |
| One semester of Psychology | Psychology 1 |

## Salary Information

The median wage in 2021 was $88,959 ([labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/](https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/oes-employment-and-wages.html#OES)).The median is the point at which half of the workers earn more and half earn less.

## Recommended Websites

| **Website** | **Website address** |
| --- | --- |
| American Association for Respiratory Care | [aarc.org/](http://www.aarc.org/) |
| Career Cornerstone | [careercornerstone.org/alliedhealth/respther/respiratorytherapist.htm](http://careercornerstone.org/alliedhealth/respther/respiratorytherapist.htm) |
| Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care | [coarc.com/](https://www.coarc.com/) |

## Select Program School Websites

| **Website** | **Website address** |
| --- | --- |
| Concorde Career College, North Hollywood | [concorde.edu/ancillary-services-programs/respiratory-therapy](https://www.concorde.edu/ancillary-services-programs/respiratory-therapy) |
| East Los Angeles College | <https://www.elac.edu/Academics/Departments/Respiratory-Therapy/Respiratory-Therapy-Students> |
| Santa Monica College | <https://www.smc.edu/academics/academic-departments/health-sciences/rta-application.php> |
| El Camino College | [elcamino.edu/academics/healthsciences/respiratorycare/](http://www.elcamino.edu/academics/healthsciences/respiratorycare/) |
| Loma Linda University | [alliedhealth.llu.edu/academics/cardiopulmonary-sciences/respiratory-care](https://alliedhealth.llu.edu/academics/cardiopulmonary-sciences/respiratory-care) |
| Los Angeles Valley College | [lavc.edu/restherapy/index.aspx](http://www.lavc.edu/restherapy/index.aspx) |
| Simi Institute | <https://simiice-simi-ca.schoolloop.com/respiratory_therapist> |

Note: Information is subject to change without notice. Check with the individual campus for the most up-to-date information. *Web site links are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and/or Los Angeles Pierce College (LAPC) of any of the products, services or opinions of the corporation or organization or individual. The Los Angeles Community College District and/or Los Angeles Pierce College bears no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of the external site or for that of subsequent links. Contact the external site for answers to questions regarding its content.*