

## **RESPIRATORY CARE THERAPY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **1. What do RTs do?**

A day in the life of an RT might include:

- Diagnosing lung and breathing disorders and recommending treatment methods.
- Interviewing patients and doing chest physical exams to determine what kind of therapy is best for their condition.
- Consulting with physicians to recommend a change in therapy, based on your evaluation of the patient.
- Analyzing breath, tissue, and blood specimens to determine levels of oxygen and other gases.
- Managing ventilators and artificial airway devices for patients who can't breathe normally on their own.
- Responding to Code Blue or other urgent calls for care.
- Educating patients and families about lung disease so they can maximize their recovery.

### **2. Where do RTs work?**

You'll find RTs-

- In hospitals giving breathing treatments to people with asthma and other respiratory conditions.
- In intensive care units managing ventilators that keep the critically ill alive.
- In emergency rooms delivering life-saving treatments.
- In newborn and pediatric units helping kids with conditions ranging from premature birth to cystic fibrosis.
- In operating rooms working with anesthesiologists to monitor patients' breathing during surgery.

- In patient’s homes providing regular check-ups and making sure people have what they need to stay out of the hospital.
- In sleep laboratories helping to diagnose disorders like sleep apnea.
- In skilled nursing facilities and pulmonary rehabilitation programs helping older people breathe easier and get more out of life.
  - In doctor’s offices conducting pulmonary function tests and providing patient education.
  - In asthma education programs helping kids and adults alike learn how to cope with the condition.
  - In smoking cessation programs assisting those who want to kick the habit for good.
  - In air transport and ambulance programs rushing to rescue people in need of immediate medical attention.
  - In case management programs helping devise long-term care plans for patients.

### **3. What are some advancement opportunities?**

Respiratory therapists who enjoy managing other people find great career ladders in most settings—particularly in the hospital, which still employs the majority of therapists. RTs who excel on the job have no problem rising up the ranks from staff therapist, to shift supervisor, to department manager. There are even therapists who have ascended to the highest levels of hospital administration!

CCBC has an articulation agreement with Towson University where graduates of the program transfer to a Bachelor of Technical/ Professional Study program.

CCBC also has a dual enrollment program where you can earn a BS RRT degree!

So, the chance to connect with patients and families, the opportunity to challenge your mind with high tech patient care, variety on the job, lots of places to work, and a career ladder that can’t be beat—it looks like respiratory care really does have it all.

### **4. How much money do RTs make?**

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employment of respiratory therapists is expected to increase faster than average over the next decade, primarily because the aging baby boom generation will increase the number of older people,

who tend to suffer the most from respiratory conditions like pneumonia and COPD and who often have respiratory complications due to heart disease and other common diseases of aging.

While U.S. employment in general is forecast to increase by 15 percent, the need for RTs will grow by up to 26 percent!

With demand for RTs on the rise, salaries are following suit. According to the 2009 Human Resources study from the AARC, the projected average annual earnings of RTs working in the U.S. is \$62,223. In this study, and depending on the area of the country, therapists just beginning their careers reported average annual earnings ranging from \$42,078-\$47,297.

## **5. Do RTs use high-tech equipment?**

Advances in technology make it possible to help patients get well in ways that were impossible years ago. Respiratory therapists work with sophisticated medical equipment like mechanical ventilators that breathe for people who can't breathe on their own and other devices that require a knowledge and love of technology.