



get on the clinical services path

Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if medical assistant is a good direction for you:

- 1 Do you want to learn how to perform basic medical tasks?
 YES NO
- 2 Are you interested in hands-on clinical work and administrative tasks?
 YES NO
- 3 Are you a multi-tasker?
 YES NO
- 4 Are you a good communicator?
 YES NO
- 5 Do you like math and science?
 YES NO
- 6 Do you like to work alone and with others?
 YES NO
- 7 Want to get into a career in two years or less?
 YES NO

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you may be on the right track!

What's it all about?

Medical assistants help care for patients, usually in doctors' offices and clinics. Working under the supervision of physicians, medical assistants perform basic clinical duties, such as taking patients' health histories and vital signs, as well as administrative tasks, such as answering telephones and scheduling appointments. With additional training, medical assistants can specialize in areas such as ophthalmology, which gives them the skills to perform extra duties related to eye care.

What do medical assistants do?

The responsibilities of medical assistants vary, depending on the type and size of facility they work in. For example, in a large clinic, a medical assistant may do either administrative or clinical work, while in a small practice, a medical assistant may perform both administrative and clinical duties. The following list includes a range of duties a medical assistant may be responsible for:

- Greet patients and escort them to exam rooms.
- Take patients' health histories and vital signs.
- Assist doctors during patient exams.
- Collect blood and other samples for routine lab tests.
- Prepare and administer medications, as directed by a physician.
- Change dressings and bandages. Remove stitches.

- Operate X-ray, electrocardiograph (EKG) and other equipment.
- Explain treatments, medications and instructions to patients.
- Clean exam rooms, dispose of used materials, arrange equipment and sterilize instruments.
- Complete insurance forms and maintain medical records.
- Contact other medical facilities to schedule patients for tests.
- Schedule appointments and receive payment for services.
- Check inventory, and order medical supplies and materials.
- Prepare and mail statements to patients. Update billing records.
- Take classes to keep knowledge and skills up-to-date.

How much money can I make?

In Alaska, medical assistants earn an average hourly wage of \$15.27, and have an average annual salary of \$31,770.

How do I become a medical assistant? How long does it take?

To become a medical assistant, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Graduate from a medical assisting program.
- May take a certification exam.

Medical assisting programs typically offer either a certificate or an associate's degree. Certificates usually take about one year of full-time study after high school, and associate's degrees typically take two years. After graduation, medical assistants can also become certified by taking a certification exam.

Learn more about medical assistant programs in Alaska by reviewing the "training providers" section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

Think you want to become a medical assistant? Well, the time to start planning is now. In general, you should take four years of English, three years of math, three years of social studies, two years of science and possibly two years of a second language. Other recommended classes and electives include:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Introduction to health care
- Certified nursing assisting
- Safety and first aid
- Health education
- Psychology
- Introduction to business
- Business and applied English
- Business math
- Accounting
- Computer applications
- Keyboarding

You should also discuss your plans with a teacher, counselor or parent, and check to see what work-based learning opportunities, such as field trips, job shadowing and internships, are available in your community.

Are there jobs available?

There are currently about 30 job openings a year for medical assistants in Alaska, and this occupation is expected to continue to grow quickly (35.6 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations).

Where are the jobs?

Medical assistants are often employed in doctors' offices, clinics and other health care provider offices. In rural Alaska, medical assistants work for regional health corporations, state and federal agencies, or community-based health care programs.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the clinical services career pathway? Be sure to read about pharmacy technicians and pharmacists – other clinical services "hot jobs" in Alaska!

