

2026

Healthcare Career Path Guide



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Healthcare Industry Overview

Healthcare is an essential part of everyday life, and its availability and quality of care can have a positive impact on your community. Patients need compassionate workers, and healthcare providers need to find the right people to fill those vital healthcare roles.

As people age, their healthcare needs increase. Senior citizens are beginning to make up a larger percentage of the nation's population than ever before, creating a higher demand for all kinds of allied health services. That's why healthcare is a field with many career opportunities.



1.9
MILLION

PROJECTIONS FROM THE
U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR
STATISTICS (BLS) SHOW
THAT 1.9 MILLION NEW
HEALTHCARE JOBS ARE
EXPECTED TO OPEN EVERY
YEAR, ON AVERAGE, FROM
2024 THROUGH 2034.¹

Career growth isn't the only reason why many may choose to work in the healthcare field. Healthcare professionals can make a difference helping and caring for people. It can be a career path that provides a sense of personal fulfillment.

This guide can help you navigate through your journey toward pursuing a career in healthcare. Learn how you can find a good fit for you, and the education you'll need

to follow that path. It will also help you discover your career path options and tips for landing a job.

Choosing a career is a major decision that requires thought and planning. Use this guide to help you think through your options and find the career that meets your needs. Once you have an idea of what you want to do, you will then see actionable steps to help you reach those career goals.

Is Healthcare for You?

Start your career path by asking yourself a few questions: do you want a career that allows you to help others? Are you looking to work in a field with higher-than-average projected career growth in the coming years? Would you like to choose from a variety of potential career options?

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, then healthcare could be a good career fit for you. It can be difficult to know where to start since there are so many types of healthcare careers to pursue. A simple first step is to look at the broad career paths and see which ones fit best with your needs and goals.



ALLIED HEALTHCARE OVERVIEW

Allied healthcare is a field with many potential career options. Some positions involve direct patient care. Other allied health careers focus on assisting healthcare practitioners or helping healthcare offices and facilities run smoothly. Others allow you to work with electronic healthcare records and healthcare technology. Careers in allied healthcare can suit a variety of skill sets since there are so many different paths to pursue. Medical assistants, pharmacy technicians, and medical billing and coding professionals are just some of the examples of allied health careers.



HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY OVERVIEW

Advances in technology impact the entire healthcare field. Some healthcare job options let people build a career around the technology they love. Many people find an opportunity to build a career in healthcare technology because of technology improvements. There are positions that focus on healthcare technology systems while other jobs deal with healthcare technology support. Many roles also work with electronic healthcare records and management systems to help keep patient records accurate and private.



HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Hospitals, healthcare facilities, and other healthcare practices need strong leadership. Consider healthcare management if you're driven, organized, and good at communication. Healthcare management may include budgeting, creating processes, communicating with leadership teams, and other business-related responsibilities. Careers include medical records clerks, accounts receivable specialists, and other office or front desk healthcare positions. There are also a variety of leadership positions available in the healthcare management field that you can work toward.

How to Find the Career Path That Fits Your Interests

Now that you have a broad overview of the career options in healthcare, it's time to narrow down your choices. Answer these questions to help point you toward a career path that fits your interests.



HOW LONG DO YOU WANT TO ATTEND SCHOOL?



WHAT IS THE CAREER OUTLOOK FOR YOUR DESIRED POSITION?

These questions can help you find the career option to best meet your needs. This guide uses data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to explain education requirements and job outlook projections for different healthcare careers.

Hint: keep in mind where you intend to live in the future. Some cities may have an increased need for certain positions. It can be helpful to know if certain positions are in demand where you plan to live and work.

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The whole process at UMA has been so amazing. If I could do it all over again, I would do it. UMA is the best school I've ever attended.



LaShunda H.,
2025 UMA Graduate

HEALTHCARE CAREER OPTIONS

Deciding your general career path can help you figure out what you want from a healthcare career. Next, you can narrow down the specific career options to meet your needs.

HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE CAREER OPTIONS IN THE ALLIED HEALTHCARE FIELD BASED ON DATA PROVIDED BY BLS. USE THE PROVIDED DATA FROM THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS TO HELP YOU FIND THE CAREER THAT MATCHES WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

Note: Where national data regarding earnings or employability within a particular field are cited, individual readers should take note that national averages may not accurately reflect the earnings of workers in their particular part of the country and may include earners at all stages of their career, not just entry-level wages for recent graduates.

Medical Biller and Coder

Medical billers and coders support healthcare providers, helping them collect payments for their services in a timely manner. Medical coders assign each diagnosis and procedure a universal identifier using standard industry codes. Once patient records have been properly coded, medical billers send the invoice or claim to the insurance company or other payer for reimbursement. Most medical billers and coders work in an office setting at a healthcare practice, hospital, or clinic.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL BILLERS AND CODERS

According to the BLS, medical secretaries typically learn industry-specific terminology and practices by attending classes at community colleges or technical schools. Online programs are also available. While formal education is generally required to obtain the relevant skills and knowledge, medical billing and coding training can be completed in less than a year, depending on the individual student. Some employers prefer candidates with relevant certifications, such as the Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) credential.

JOB OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL BILLERS AND CODERS

Medical billers and coders perform a specialized role in today's healthcare practices. Job titles in this field include medical office assistant, insurance benefits specialist, and medical biller and coder.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR MEDICAL BILLERS AND CODERS

Medical billers and coders perform a specialized role in today's healthcare practices. Job titles in this field include medical office assistant, insurance benefits specialist, and medical biller and coder.

- Understanding of accounts receivable (AR) processes and healthcare records
- Proficiency with computers, including billing and coding programs, and record keeping systems
- Knowledge of medical terminology and related industry codes

Note: UMA's graduates in the 2022-2023 cohort of its Medical Billing and Coding diploma and associate degree programs reported to UMA that they earned a median hourly wage that is approximately at or slightly higher than the BLS's lowest decile. Earnings information was typically obtained by a self-report from the graduate, and occasionally from the graduate's employer or other sources.

4%

JOB GROWTH

The **BLS projects** employment of medical secretaries could increase by 4% between 2024 and 2034.²

Dental Assistant

Dental assistants perform a variety of tasks to help dental practices run smoothly. They work with patients and may help keep office records and schedule appointments. A dental assistant typically works in a dentist's office, but they may also sometimes work in schools, hospitals, or nursing homes.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

The exact education requirements for dental assistants vary from state to state. However, the [BLS](#) states that this position may require graduation from an accredited program and for the student to pass a certification exam.³ For some states, it could be a one- or two-year program from a vocational or dental assistant training school.

JOB OPTIONS FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

Dental assistants may find work in a specialized position. For example, pediatric dental assistants specialize in working with young patients, while surgical dental assistants assist during dental surgery. These specialized positions may require additional skills or job experience.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

According to the [BLS](#), some skills that dental assistants need include:⁵

- Focus on details
- Listening skills
- Ability to work with your hands
- Organization skills
- Good interpersonal abilities

6%

JOB GROWTH

The [BLS](#) estimates that the need for dental assistants could increase by 6% from 2024 to 2034.⁴

Phlebotomy Technician

Phlebotomy technicians, also referred to as phlebotomists, are responsible for drawing blood from patients. This could be for routine tests, medical research, blood transfusions, or blood donations. Hospitals are the most common place for phlebotomists to work. Other common workplaces include laboratories, doctors' offices, and blood donor facilities.



6%

JOB GROWTH

Bloodwork is a critical part of the healthcare industry. It is used to help diagnose patients and perform crucial medical research. That demand is why phlebotomists are expected to have an 6% increase in jobs from 2024 to 2034, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).⁶

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PHLEBOTOMISTS

Certification is often a requirement to work in phlebotomy. Vocational and career training schools, technical schools, and community colleges are popular options for phlebotomy programs. These programs typically combine work in the classroom with hands-on clinical work. Students can typically complete phlebotomy programs in four months to one year.

JOB OPTIONS FOR PHLEBOTOMISTS

Sometimes there are advancement opportunities available in the phlebotomy field. These positions could require additional experience, training, or education.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR PHLEBOTOMISTS

Phlebotomists need these skills, according to the [BLS](#).⁷

- Dexterity
- Caring toward others
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to focus on details

Pharmacy Technician

Pharmacy technicians are instrumental in pharmacies. They help fill prescriptions and help patients get the medicine they need. Pharmacy technicians work in pharmacies, which could be located in drug stores, retail establishments such as grocery stores, or hospitals.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PHARMACY TECHNICIANS

Many states and employers require pharmacy technicians to pass an exam and participate in formal education. Technical or career schools can help students learn the skills they need to become a pharmacy technician. An associate degree program might be completed in 18 months, depending on the individual student.

JOB OPTIONS FOR PHARMACY TECHNICIANS

Pharmacy technicians could work in retail settings, hospitals, or even mail-order facilities. Though the basic job is the same, there could be varying duties based on the specific workplace.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR PHARMACY TECHNICIANS

According to the [BLS](#), pharmacy technicians need the following skills:⁹

- Attention to detail
- Basic math skills
- Good listening skills
- Organization skills
- Strong customer service

6%

JOB GROWTH

Pharmacy technicians are expected to see a 6% increase in hiring from 2024 to 2034, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).⁸ This is faster than the average for all occupations.

Medical Assistant

A medical assistant usually does a combination of clinical work and administrative tasks. They may work in doctors' offices, hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Their specific job duties depend on the size and specialty of their workplace. They may take patients' vital signs, schedule patient appointments, assist physicians during patient exams, and record basic patient information.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

According to the [BLS](#), most employers prefer to hire medical assistants who have completed formal education.¹⁰ There are programs available from vocational schools, technical and career training schools, and community colleges. There are one and two-year programs available. Students typically study in the classroom or online, train in campus laboratories, and complete an on-site externship course under the supervision of healthcare supervisors.

JOB OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

A medical assistant's workplace helps to determine what their daily job looks like. They sometimes help with setting appointments, data entry, and coding for insurance. Medical assistants also help doctors and work with patients.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

The [BLS](#) indicates that medical assistants require skills such as:¹²

- Attention to detail
- Ability to analyze medical data and code medical records
- Technical ability with instruments needed to take vital signs
- Skills for interacting with people

12%

JOB GROWTH

The medical assistant field is experiencing employment growth. [BLS](#) projections show that medical assistant jobs should increase by 12% from 2024 to 2034.¹¹

Medical Administrative Assistant

Medical administrative assistants help take care of tasks that help a healthcare facility run smoothly. This includes gathering patient information, scheduling appointments, verifying insurance information, and updating patients' medical records. Medical administrative assistants also help with other office-related tasks, such as answering phones, sharing documents with other healthcare entities, and more.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

While administrative assistants in other fields often learn on the job, medical administrative assistants may require additional training. This training helps individuals in these roles learn the terminology they'll likely encounter when working in a healthcare setting.

JOB OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Medical administrative assistants can have a variety of different titles, like medical receptionists and insurance benefits specialists. A customer service representative is another similar title.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR MEDICAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

The major skills needed for medical administrative assistants include:

- Ability to write accurately and with professionalism
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Organizational skills
- Good judgment and decision-making skills

4%

JOB GROWTH

The medical administrative assistant field is projected to grow 4% from 2024 to 2034.¹³

Medical Office and Billing Specialist

Medical office and billing specialists perform a variety of office duties within healthcare settings. This includes managing the office's records and filing systems, processing insurance claims, and handling patient files. You can find medical office and billing specialists in physician's offices, hospitals, insurance companies, and a variety of other settings.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL OFFICE AND BILLING SPECIALISTS

Since medical office and billing specialists work with both patients and healthcare organization files and claims, some level of formal training or education may be needed to enter this role according to the [BLS](#).¹⁴ This helps you learn the language used in the healthcare field, better preparing you for this type of role.

JOB OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL OFFICE AND BILLING SPECIALISTS

Medical office and billing specialists can pursue a variety of positions. Among them are medical office assistant, medical receptionist, and insurance benefits specialist. Each of these positions performs similar functions as a medical office and billing specialist but uses a different position title.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR MEDICAL OFFICE AND BILLING SPECIALISTS

The major skills needed for medical office and billing specialists include:

- Decision-making skills
- Ability to communicate with other staff and patients
- Organization
- Writing skills, such as good grammar and using a professional tone

4%

JOB GROWTH

Medical office and billing specialist positions fall under the BLS category of medical secretaries and administrative assistants. The medical secretary and administrative assistant field is projected to grow 4% from 2024 to 2034.¹⁵

Patient Care Technician

Patient care technicians work directly with patients. These positions include professionals under the title of home health aides. Patient care techs may work directly in people's homes or in group settings like assisted living facilities or retirement communities. They help people in need with their daily activities and may work with people with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or other forms of impairment. Elderly people may also require the assistance of a patient care technician.



17%

JOB GROWTH

Home health aides are expected to see hiring growth in the coming years due to the increased needs of the aging population, according to the BLS. This field is projected to see a 17% increase in jobs between 2024 and 2034.¹⁶

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PATIENT CARE TECHNICIANS

The BLS explains that home health aides don't always have specific educational requirements. However, patient care technicians who are employed with certified agencies are often required to have training and pass one or more certification exams. Some states require formal training, which is available from community colleges, vocational schools, elder care programs, and home healthcare agencies. If a home health agency gets reimbursed from Medicaid or Medicare, their employees must get proper training and pass an exam to get certified, according to the BLS. Some states also require specific certification. Community colleges and career training schools may offer training and certification prep for patient care technicians.

JOB OPTIONS FOR PATIENT CARE TECHNICIANS

Job options for patient care technicians depend on the needs of the patient. For example, some home health aides may provide basic care while others may have tasks that are specific to the patient, like help with prosthetic limbs. There may be some home health positions that require additional training for medical equipment that the patient needs, like ventilators for patients who have trouble breathing.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR PATIENT CARE TECHNICIANS

Since home health aides work closely with people, there are certain skills that are important to have:

- Stamina to move patients when necessary and perform other physical tasks
- Ability to pay attention to details and follow specific patient care instructions
- Integrity and the ability to make patients feel comfortable
- Interpersonal skills that help you work with different personality types and various emotional states

Social and Human Services

Social and human service assistants help provide support in many fields, like rehabilitation, social work, and psychology. Since healthcare and human services are so interconnected, social and human service assistants can make a difference in the health and overall well-being of their clients. They work to help clients receive aid as needed, with everything from navigating Medicaid to finding assistance with daily needs like eating and personal hygiene. Employees in this field may work for private organizations, nonprofits, government organizations, or healthcare facilities, and typically work full-time. Social and human service assistants sometimes work on weekends and during the evenings.



6%

JOB GROWTH

The increased need for healthcare in the aging population is one of the reasons why the BLS projects that social and human service assistants could see an 6% increase in employment from 2024 to 2034.¹⁸

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Social and human service assistants have varying educational requirements for employment. The [BLS](#) explains that even when a degree isn't a requirement, a certificate or an associate degree is common for this position.¹⁷ An education in the field may also help prepare you for additional responsibilities and may increase your chances for advancement in the field.

JOB OPTIONS FOR SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICE ASSISTANTS

There are many job titles in the same field as social and human service assistants. Some of these positions include:

- Member advocate
- Community support services / Residential associate
- Caregiver
- Direct support professional
- Behavioral or mental health technician

SKILLS NEEDED FOR SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Some of the most important skills needed for social and human service assistants include:

- A compassionate personality in stressful situations
- Strong organization and communication skills
- The ability to solve problems and manage your time
- Interpersonal abilities in the face of sometimes difficult circumstances

Healthcare Accounting

If you enjoy working with numbers and have a passion for healthcare, you may want to consider pursuing a career in healthcare accounting. A career path in this field involves learning how to help healthcare organizations keep track of financial information, checking financial data for accuracy, and creating financial reports.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTHCARE ACCOUNTING

Most bookkeeping and auditing clerks need some postsecondary education but can also learn some of their skills on the job. When supervised by another, more experienced employee, new clerks could learn how to complete their tasks. Basic math and computer skills are important to this role, in addition to knowledge of spreadsheets and bookkeeping software.

JOB OPTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE ACCOUNTING

Professionals in this field typically work in settings like physicians' offices, hospitals, healthcare facilities, and healthcare and insurance companies. Associate degree graduates can typically expect to pursue entry-level roles such as bookkeeper, accounting clerk, and accounting assistant.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR HEALTHCARE ACCOUNTING

- Comfortable working with numbers
- Proficiency with computers, including spreadsheets and relevant software
- Ability to keep information confidential
- Attention to detail

-6% **JOB GROWTH**

From 2024 to 2034, bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks are projected to see a decline in employment, according to the [BLS](#).¹⁹

Health Information Management

This role may be referred to as health information technicians. They help keep health data well-organized, accurate, and updated so physicians can make sound medical decisions and provide informed care. They may also answer telephones, copy or file documents, and verify insurance.



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIANS

A diploma or an associate degree is usually required to land a position as a health information technician, according to the [BLS](#). Some employers require official certification before being hired or shortly after becoming employed in this field.²⁰

JOB OPTIONS FOR HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIANS

Health information technicians go by many names. Position titles in this field include medical receptionist or medical office assistant. Health information technicians may be employed in a variety of locations, like hospitals, doctors' offices, and nursing homes.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIANS

The major skills needed for health information technicians include:

- Being analytical
- Confidentiality
- Attention to detail
- Interpersonal abilities

7%

JOB GROWTH

Health information technicians have a positive job outlook, according to the [BLS](#). This position is projected to see a 7% increase in employment from 2024 to 2034.²¹

Succeeding in School

Once you begin school, you're on the path toward pursuing a healthcare career. It's exciting! To acquire the education, you need for the career you're working toward, success in school is important. But if you haven't been in school for a while, you may not know what to expect. That's okay. There are plenty of resources available to help you succeed in school.

TO START, BOOKMARK THESE BLOG POSTS:

[5 Easy Time Management Tips to Be More Productive](#)

[7 Ways to Appreciate \(and Even Enjoy\) the Educational Process](#)

Organization and time management can make it easier to get your classwork and homework done. But if you need extra help, your school may have some academic resources and guidance to help you.

LOOK FOR A SCHOOL THAT OFFERS SUPPORT

Some schools offer in-depth resources to help their students succeed. Ideally, you want a school that invests in your success and is to help you meet your goals. Find out if there is a dedicated student success team at your school.

Some things to look for include:

- Help with assignments
- Access to online education resources like eBooks, medical journals, and reference articles
- Learning labs to help you understand the course material
- Certification / licensure exam preparation

Success is more than just doing well in class. Sometimes life will challenge you in ways that may impact your education. Maybe you're having a hard time balancing school and work. It could be that family problems or health issues are getting in your way. No matter what the issue is, try to find a school that is dedicated to helping you find a way through it. Some schools offer student services to help guide you through problems that may come up. These student services can make a big difference in your educational experience. School can be a lot less stressful when you know that there is a team available to help you.



Pursuing a Role in Healthcare



So, you've decided to work toward pursuing a career in healthcare, and you've chosen an educational opportunity. Once you earn your diploma / degree, you'll be in a better position to begin your job search.

Job interviews are often nerve-racking. But the good news is, with preparation and practice, you can develop strong interviewing skills.

Here are some things to work on before you apply for a job:

- A cover letter and resume personalized toward the job you're applying for
- Interview preparation
- Professional wardrobe choices for your job interview

Some schools will help you with everything you need to prepare for the job application process, the interview, and even the first 30 days on the job. Check with your school's career services department to see how they can help you.

Mock interviews can be especially helpful. Through these practice sessions, you can begin to understand the sort of questions that the interviewer may ask you — and how you should answer them.

BOOKMARK THESE BLOG POSTS FOR JOB SEARCH ADVICE ON BODY LANGUAGE, INTERVIEWING, AND MORE:

- [How to Overcome Interview Anxiety](#)
- [Preparing for a Job Interview](#)
- [5 Surprising Interview Tips](#)
- [Tips for Writing Thank You Notes After Your Interview](#)
- [A Complete Guide to the Interview Process](#)



I finished all my classes. I did my externship and I got hired. Now I work with a doctor full-time!



Albany S.,
2025 UMA Graduate

How UMA Can Help

Ultimate Medical Academy (UMA) offers several healthcare diploma and degree programs, many of which can prepare you to fill roles like the ones referenced in this career guide. UMA is a care-forward institution, and our staff is always ready and willing to do what we can to help you succeed in your desired healthcare role.

SOME BENEFITS OFFERED BY UMA INCLUDE:

- Providing students with teams to support them during and after graduation
- Working with employer partners who prefer to hire UMA grads
- Offering access to Continuing Medical Education (CME) opportunities

Graduation is only the beginning. Get ready to go out there and find the job you've been working toward. Keep this guide handy to help you on your way, and contact your school if you have any questions or need any assistance.

Also, contact UMA if we can be of any assistance. We look forward to learning how we can help you achieve your healthcare career goals. In the meantime, good luck with all your professional endeavors. **YOU'VE GOT THIS!**

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The UMA staff really cares about your success. I feel loved, appreciated. I felt a sense of community. If you're looking for people to push you, you ought to go to this school.



Javona J.,
2025 UMA Graduate



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