

Pharmacy Aides

(O*NET 31-9095.00)

Significant Points

- Job opportunities are expected to be good for full-time and part-time work, especially for those with related work experience.
- Many pharmacy aides work evenings, weekends, and holidays.
- About 82 percent work in retail pharmacies, grocery stores, department stores, or mass retailers.

Nature of the Work

Pharmacy aides perform administrative duties in pharmacies. Aides often are clerks or cashiers who primarily answer telephones, handle money, stock shelves, and perform other clerical duties. They work closely with pharmacy technicians. Pharmacy technicians usually perform more complex tasks than do aides, although in some States the duties and titles of the jobs overlap. (See the statement on pharmacy technicians elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) Aides refer any questions regarding prescriptions, drug information, or health matters to a pharmacist. (See the statement on pharmacists elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Pharmacy aides may establish and maintain patient profiles, prepare insurance claim forms, and stock and take inventory of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Accurate recordkeeping is necessary to help avert dangerous drug interactions. In addition, because many people have medical insurance to help pay for prescriptions, it is essential that pharmacy aides correspond efficiently and correctly with third-party insurance providers to obtain payment. Pharmacy aides also maintain inventory and inform the supervisor of stock needs so that the pharmacy does not run out of vital medications that customers need. Some aides also help with the maintenance of equipment and supplies.

Work environment. Pharmacy aides work in clean, organized, well-lighted, and well-ventilated areas. Most of their workday is spent on their feet. They may be required to lift heavy boxes or to use stepladders to retrieve supplies from high shelves.

Aides work the same hours that pharmacists do. These include evenings, nights, weekends, and some holidays, particularly in facilities that are open 24 hours a day such as hospitals and some retail pharmacies.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most pharmacy aides are trained on the job. Employers prefer applicants with previous experience and strong customer service skills. Many pharmacy aides go on to become pharmacy technicians.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Pharmacy aides	31-9095	50,000	45,000	-5,600	-11

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.



Pharmacy aides perform administrative duties in pharmacies, such as answering phones and stocking shelves.

Education and training. Most pharmacy aides receive informal on-the-job training, but employers favor those with at least a high school diploma. Prospective pharmacy aides with experience working as cashiers may have an advantage when applying for jobs. Employers also prefer applicants with experience managing inventories and using computers.

Pharmacy aides begin their training by observing a more experienced worker. After they become familiar with the store's equipment, policies, and procedures, they begin to work on their own. Once they become experienced, aides are not likely to receive additional training, except when new equipment is introduced or when policies or procedures change.

Other qualifications. Strong customer service and communication skills are essential, as pharmacy aides frequently interact with patients, fellow employees, and other health-care professionals. Aides entering the field also need strong spelling, reading, and mathematics skills. Successful pharmacy aides are organized, dedicated, friendly, and responsible. They should be willing and able to take directions. Candidates interested in becoming pharmacy aides cannot have prior records of drug or substance abuse.

Advancement. With experience or certification, many pharmacy aides go on to become pharmacy technicians. Some become pharmacists after completing a substantial amount of formal training.

Employment

Pharmacy aides held about 50,000 jobs in 2006. About 82 percent worked in retail pharmacies, most of which were in drug stores but some of which were in grocery stores, department stores, or mass retailers. About 7 percent of aides worked in hospitals.

Job Outlook

Employment of pharmacy aides is expected to decline rapidly from 2006 to 2016. Job prospects, however, should be good.

Employment change. Employment of pharmacy aides is expected to decline rapidly, decreasing by 11 percent over the 2006 to 2016 period. Demand for pharmacy aides will fall as pharmacy technicians become increasingly responsible for answering phones, stocking shelves, operating cash registers, and performing other administrative tasks. In addition, with increased training, many pharmacy aides will become pharmacy technicians, which will result in further declines in pharmacy aide jobs.

Job prospects. Despite declining employment, job opportunities for full-time and part-time work are expected to be good. The frequent need to replace workers who leave the occupation will create opportunities for interested applicants. Aides with related work experience in pharmacies, or as cashiers or stock clerks in other retail settings, should have the best opportunities.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of wage-and-salary pharmacy aides were \$9.35 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned be-

tween \$7.89 and \$11.58; the lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.92, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$14.64. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of pharmacy aides in May 2006 were:

General medical and surgical hospitals.....	\$11.53
Grocery stores	9.87
Pharmacies and drug stores.....	8.97

Related Occupations

The work of pharmacy aides is closely related to that of pharmacy technicians, cashiers, and stock clerks and order fillers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on employment opportunities, contact local employers or local offices of the State employment service.