



*Detailed Guide for*

## Pharmacy Technicians in California

**May also be called:** Pharmacy Technologists; Pharmacy Laboratory Technicians; Pharmacist Technicians; Certified Pharmacy Technicians; Pharmaceutical Care Associates; and Pharmacist Assistants.

### *What Would I Do?*

Pharmacy Technicians generally greet patients and accept their written requests for prescriptions or prescription refills. They also receive prescription requests via fax or electronic mail sent from doctors offices. In California, they are not permitted to accept prescription requests over the phone. However, they can assist customers by answering simple questions, locating items, or referring them to the pharmacist for medication requests or other information. In addition to medication, they help pharmacists provide other health care products to patients.

Pharmacy Technicians work under the supervision and control of a licensed pharmacist. They perform repetitive, routine tasks related to the processing of a prescription in a pharmacy; however, they cannot do the work that is restricted to the pharmacist. Technicians must first verify that the patient and medication information on the prescription is complete and accurate before they can prepare medications to fill the prescription. In preparing medications, they count tablets and measure, mix, pour, and record amounts and dosages of medications. They also remove drugs from stock, place medications into containers, create labels for the containers, and package or repackage pharmaceuticals. Once the prescription has been prepared, it is verified and documented in writing by a licensed pharmacist before it is given to the patient. Any questions regarding prescriptions, drug information, or health matters are referred to the pharmacist.

Commonly used medications are usually pre-packaged in unit-dose form by drug manufacturers, so that Technicians need only select the right package. When pre-packaged unit-doses are not available, Technicians must measure or count the prescribed amount from bulk containers and create the package themselves. When unit doses are to be administered by injection, Technicians transfer the medication from vials, using sterile techniques, to the appropriate number of disposable syringes.

Technicians may perform inventory control, keeping track of medications, chemicals, medical equipment, and other supplies that are dispensed to patients. They prepare orders for additional quantities when stock gets low. They also receive and store incoming supplies, check invoices against quantities received, compute prices, file prescriptions, and record prescription information and other data into a computer. Additional duties performed by Pharmacy Technicians may include delivering drugs and pharmaceutical supplies, cleaning equipment, and sterilizing glassware according to prescribed methods.

In hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted-living facilities, Technicians have added responsibilities including reading patients' charts and preparing and delivering medicine to patients. They calculate

and prepare intravenous (IV) mixtures, using additional preventative measures in preparing chemotherapy treatment mixtures. They also assemble a complete 24-hour supply of medications where individual doses of each medication are separately packaged and labeled, then placed in the medicine cabinets of each patient. Supervising pharmacists check medications for accuracy before dispensing to patients. Technicians record information about the prescribed medications on the patient's profile. The profiles are the basic source of information used by Technicians for filling medication orders and must be continually updated as new orders are received.

Pharmacy Technicians use a variety of tools and technology in their work. They may use tablet counters, filling or sealing auger dose machines, fume hoods, and laboratory balances. They also use computer software for accounting, inventory, and label making; furthermore, they may use database user interface and query software.

### Important Tasks and Related Skills

Each task below is matched to a sample skill required to carry out the task.

Task	Skill Used in this Task
Receive written prescription or refill requests and verify that information is complete and accurate.	Written Comprehension
Maintain proper storage and security conditions for drugs.	Monitoring
Answer telephones, responding to questions or requests.	Active Listening
Fill bottles with prescribed medications and type and affix labels.	Near Vision
Assist customers by answering simple questions, locating items or referring them to the pharmacist for medication information.	Customer and Personal Service
Price and file prescriptions that have been filled.	Mathematics
Clean, and help maintain, equipment and work areas, and sterilize glassware according to prescribed methods.	Deductive Reasoning
Establish and maintain patient profiles, including lists of medications taken by individual patients.	Medicine and Dentistry
Order, label, and count stock of medications, chemicals, and supplies, and enter inventory data into computer.	Information Ordering
Receive and store incoming supplies, verify quantities against invoices, and inform supervisors of stock needs and shortages.	Critical Thinking

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org)

### Working Conditions

Pharmacy Technicians typically work in retail or hospital settings that are clean, organized, well-lit, and well-ventilated. They spend most of their work day on their feet. Although the work is often repetitive, it is highly precise and generally requires extreme care in the handling and storing of drugs and chemicals. Physical demands may include lifting heavy boxes up to 40 pounds, moving delivery carts, and using stepladders to retrieve supplies from high shelves.

Technicians work the same hours that pharmacists work. A full-time work week is generally 8-hour days, five days a week, including rotating weekends. Technicians may also work evenings, nights, and holidays, particularly in facilities, such as hospital pharmacies, that are open for 24 hours, 7 days a week. For some positions, 10-hour shifts are required. Many jobs are part-time or per diem/on-call. Teamwork and the ability to work under pressure and deal with people is very important because Technicians are usually required to work with pharmacists, aides, and other Technicians.

Pharmacy Technicians can join the California Pharmacists Association or Pharmacy Foundation of California. They can also join the Health Care Workers division of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Some Pharmacy Technicians belong to unions representing hospital or grocery store workers.

### ***Will This Job Fit Me?***

The job of Pharmacy Technician will appeal to those who enjoy working with people and performing duties that are organized, clearly defined, and require accuracy and attention to detail. This occupation satisfies those with conventional interests. Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines where the lines of authority are clear.

### ***What Wages and Benefits Can I Expect?***

#### **Wages**

The median wage in 2015 for Pharmacy Technicians in California is \$38,551 annually, or \$18.54 hourly. The median is the point at which half of the workers earn more and half earn less.

Annual Wages for 2015	Low (25th percentile)	Median (50th percentile)	High (75th percentile)
California	\$31,524	\$38,551	\$47,971

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html) Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Hourly Wages for 2015	Low (25th percentile)	Median (50th percentile)	High (75th percentile)
California	\$15.16	\$18.54	\$23.07

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html). Wages do not reflect self-employment.

#### **Benefits**

Benefit packages vary among employers and generally include paid vacation, sick leave, medical and dental insurance, and retirement plans. Many hospitals pay vision insurance.

### ***What is the Job Outlook?***

Good job opportunities are expected for full-time and part-time employment, especially for Technicians with formal training or previous experience. Job openings for Pharmacy Technicians will result from the expansion of retail pharmacies and other employment settings and from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or retire. Employment of Pharmacy Technicians is expected to grow and their demand is high because of the increased pharmaceutical needs of a larger, older population. Furthermore, with advances in science, the need for Pharmacy Technicians will grow as more medications become available to treat a greater number of conditions. New medical technologies and developments in administering medication also increase the demand for Technicians.

## Projections of Employment

In California, the number of Pharmacy Technicians is expected to grow faster than average growth rate for all occupations. Jobs for Pharmacy Technicians are expected to increase by 18.5 percent, or 5,800 jobs between 2012 and 2022.

### Estimated Employment and Projected Growth Pharmacy Technicians

Geographic Area (Estimated Year-Projected Year)	Estimated Employment	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Additional Openings Due to Net Replacements
California (2012-2022)	31,400	37,200	5,800	18.5	3,100

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html)

## Annual Job Openings

In California, an average of 590 new job openings per year is expected for Pharmacy Technicians, plus an additional 310 job openings due to net replacement needs, resulting in a total of 900 job openings.

### Estimated Average Annual Job Openings Pharmacy Technicians

Geographic Area (Estimated Year-Projected Year)	Jobs From Growth	Jobs Due to Net Replacements	Total Annual Job Openings
California (2012-2022)	590	310	900

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html)

## How Do I Qualify?

### Education, Training, and Other Requirements

Pharmacy Technicians must have a current license to work in the State of California. To obtain a Pharmacy Technician license, applicants must submit a Pharmacy Technician application and pay the appropriate fees, pass a criminal background check, and obtain a Live Scan fingerprint clearance. They must also have a high school diploma or GED and no felony convictions. In addition, they must meet one of the following educational and training requirements:

- Obtain an associate of arts degree in pharmacy technology.
- Complete a course of training specified by the California State Board of Pharmacy. The training courses acceptable to the Board include any Pharmacy Technician training programs that are: accredited by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists; provided by a branch of the federal armed services for which the applicant possesses a certificate of completion; or any other course that provides a training period of at least 240 hours of theoretical and practical instruction.
- Graduate from a school of pharmacy approved by the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education or recognized by the California State Board of Pharmacy.

- Obtain certification from the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB). This is accomplished by taking and passing the National Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination. Those who pass the exam earn the title of Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT).

## Experience

Some previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience may be helpful in these occupations. Although most Pharmacy Technicians receive informal on-the-job training, employers favor those who have completed formal training and certification. Employers who have insufficient resources to give on-the-job training often seek formally educated Pharmacy Technicians. Formal education programs and certification emphasize the Technician's interest in and dedication to the work. Some hospitals, proprietary schools, vocational or technical colleges, and community colleges offer formal education programs. In addition, all of the military services train selected individuals to be Pharmacy Technicians/Pharmacy Specialists. Students in Pharmacy Technician training programs are sometimes hired after graduation by one of the pharmacies in which they performed their supervised clinical work experience.

Employers often expect applicants to have some degree of familiarity with medical and pharmaceutical terminology and metric measurements. Computer knowledge and the ability to perform mathematical calculations are often preferred. Good communication skills, reading comprehension, and the capability of typing 30 to 40 words per minute are usually required.

## Early Career Planning

High school students interested in becoming Pharmacy Technicians should take courses in typing, math, and the physical sciences. Chemistry laboratory classes are especially useful.

## Work Study Programs

California offers Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) for Pharmacy Technicians. One such program is titled Pharmacy Technician I. To find an ROP program near you, go to the California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs Web site at [www.carocp.org/carocps.html](http://www.carocp.org/carocps.html).

## Continuing Education

Pharmacy Technician licenses must be renewed every two years. Currently, Pharmacy Technicians are not required to complete any continuing education hours to renew their licenses. However, the PTCB does require continuing education to renew the CPhT certification. If the applicant fails to renew their license within 60 days of the expiration date, it will be cancelled. Cancelled licenses cannot be renewed. Returning to work as a Technician in California will require the submission of a new application with the appropriate fees and meeting the current requirements.

## Licensing and Certification

Contact the agency that issues the license for additional information. Click on the license title below for details.

- Pharmacy Technician at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/OccGuides/LicenseDetail.aspx?LicID=750](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/OccGuides/LicenseDetail.aspx?LicID=750)

Pharmacy Technicians may hold one or several certificates such as: Certified Pharmacy Technician, Medical Terminology, Certified in Healthcare Privacy and Security, and/or Pharmaceutical Industry Knowledge. For more information, go to the U.S. Department of Labor's Career InfoNet Web site at [www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org) and scroll down to "Career Tools." Click on "Certification Finder" at [www.acinet.org/certifications\\_new/default.aspx](http://www.acinet.org/certifications_new/default.aspx) and follow the instructions to locate certification programs.

### Where Can I Find Training?

There are two ways to search for training information at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html)

- Search by Field of Study to find what programs are available and what schools offer those programs. You may use keywords such as: Pharmacy Technician; Pharmacy Assistant; Medical Assisting; Pharmacy Clerk; and Hospital Unit Assistant.
- Search by Training Provider to find schools by name, type of school, or location.

Contact the schools you are interested in to learn about the classes available, tuition and fees, and any prerequisite course work.

### Where Would I Work?

The largest industries employing Pharmacy Technicians are as follows:

Industry Title	Percent of Total Employment for Occupation in California
Health and Personal Care Stores	53.0%
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	18.5%
Other General Merchandise Stores	6.1%
Grocery Stores	4.1%
Offices of Physicians	3.9%

Source: EDD/LMID Staffing Patterns at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/iomatrix/staffing-patterns1.asp](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/iomatrix/staffing-patterns1.asp)

### Finding a Job

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Hospitals frequently advertise openings in newspaper ads and some also recruit through private employment agencies. Job seekers should also apply directly to hospital personnel departments throughout California. Applicants that apply for Veterans Administration Hospital positions, as well as other government job openings, must first pass a Federal or State civil service examination. **Online job opening systems** include JobCentral at [www.jobcentral.com](http://www.jobcentral.com) and CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup> at [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov).

To find your nearest One-Stop Career Center, go to [Service Locator](#). View the [helpful job search tips](#) for more resources. (requires [Adobe Reader](#)).

### Yellow Page Headings

You can focus your local job search by checking employers listed online or in your local telephone directory. Below are some suggested headings where you might find employers of Pharmacy Technicians.

- Pharmacy
- Drug Stores
- Hospitals
- Grocery Stores
- Government Offices
- Pharmaceutical Products-Wholesale & Manufacturers

### **Find Possible Employers**

To locate a list of employers in your area, use "Find Employers" on the LaborMarketInfo Web site at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/aspdotnet/databrowsing/empMain.aspx?menuChoice=emp>

- Select the search for employers by occupation.
- Select a geographic area.
- Search for an occupation by keyword, occupation, or category.
- Select one of the top industries that employ the occupation.
- This will give you a list of employers in that industry in your area.
- Click on "View Filter Selections" to limit your list to specific cities or employer size.
- Click on an employer for the street address, telephone number, size of business, Web site, etc.
- Contact the employer for possible employment.

### ***Where Could This Job Lead?***

Promotional opportunities for Pharmacy Technicians often require additional education or training and can vary among employers. Possible career paths may include: medical equipment preparers, occupational therapy assistants, dieticians and nutritionists, and dietetic technicians. In addition, some Technicians may decide to go to college to become a pharmacist.

Certified Technicians may earn higher salaries and receive promotions. Shift differentials for working evenings or weekends can also increase earnings. As Pharmacy Technicians work to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities, they may receive increased recognition, raises in pay, or other forms of advancement. Those who work in hospitals with clinical pharmacy programs may check the work of other Technicians in connection with the filling of orders that have previously been reviewed and approved by a licensed pharmacist.

### ***Related Occupations***

Below is a list of occupations related to Pharmacy Technicians.

- Animal Breeders (SOC 45-2021)
- Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians (SOC 29-2031)
- Dental Assistants (SOC 31-9091)
- Medical Records and Health Information Technicians (SOC 29-2071)
- Medical Secretaries (SOC 43-6013)
- Opticians, Dispensing (SOC 29-2081)

### ***Other Sources***

- California Board of Pharmacy  
[www.pharmacy.ca.gov](http://www.pharmacy.ca.gov)
- Pharmacy Foundation of California  
[www.pharmacyfoundation.org](http://www.pharmacyfoundation.org)
- California Pharmacists Association  
[www.cpha.com](http://www.cpha.com)



- The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy  
www.nabp.net
- Pharmacy Technician Certification Board  
www.ptcb.org
- American Society of Health-System Pharmacists  
www.ashp.org

These links are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by EDD.

### ***For the Career Professional***

The following codes are provided to assist counselors, job placement workers, or other career professionals.

System	Code
SOC - Standard Occupational Classification at <a href="http://www.bls.gov/soc/">www.bls.gov/soc/</a>	29-2052
O*NET - Occupational Information Network at <a href="http://online.onetcenter.org/">online.onetcenter.org/</a>	
Pharmacy Technicians	29-2052.00
Interest Codes (RIASEC) at <a href="http://online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/#cur">online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/#cur</a>	CRS
CIP - Classification of Instructional Programs at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/">nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/</a>	
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	510805
TOP - Taxonomy of Programs at <a href="http://www.ccccurriculum.info/">www.ccccurriculum.info/</a> (California Community Colleges)	
Pharmacy Technology	122100

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