

Occupations and Workplaces

Phlebotomist

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What is a phlebotomist?

A phlebotomist is a medical professional trained to perform blood draws. Phlebotomists collect and prepare blood for testing so it can be analyzed in a medical laboratory. They also collect blood for donation, perform blood transfusions, and administer intravenous therapies.

Where do phlebotomists work?

Phlebotomists work in a variety of places, including but not limited to:

- Clinical laboratories
- Pharmacies
- Hospitals
- Community health centers
- Assisted living facilities and nursing homes
- Doctor's offices
- Blood donation centers and blood drives
- Insurance companies
- Scientific research

What hazards are phlebotomists exposed to?

Hazards include:

Biological hazards

- Bloodborne pathogens (such as [hepatitis B](#), [hepatitis C](#), [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\)](#)) and other infectious agents through blood
- Bodily fluids
- Exposure to airborne illnesses (viral or bacterial) from patients

Chemical Hazards

- Exposure to hazardous drugs or substances when administering to patients, including chemotherapy. Follow the precautions on any medical pamphlet or the manufacturer's instructions
- [Formaldehyde](#) (used for specimen preservation)
- Disinfectant cleaning agents and [cleaning products](#)
- [Latex](#) (found in gloves and equipment)
- [Dermatitis](#), irritant contact

Ergonomic Hazards

- [Lifting or moving patients](#) and equipment
- [Carpal Tunnel](#)
- Physical injuries, such as back strain, from [standing](#) for long periods of time
- [Shift work](#)
- [Fatigue](#)

Psychological Hazards

- Uncooperative, agitated or aggressive patients
- High [stress](#)

Safety Hazards

- [Needlestick and sharps injuries](#)
- [Slips and trips](#)
- [Working alone with patients](#)

What are some general safe work practices?

Ensure that you are trained and informed about how to avoid the various health and safety hazards of your job.

- [Hand washing](#), [routine practices](#), and other measures are extremely important for the reduction of infections. Be sure to use moisturizers to prevent your skin from drying.
- Learn proper techniques to avoid needlestick injuries.
- Learn safe patient lifting techniques - create a safe patient handling program.
- Understanding other additional measures for reducing exposure to [infectious diseases](#), such as COVID-19.
- Learn safe lifting techniques, such as [manual material handling](#) and patient handling techniques
- Be aware of your surroundings to avoid trips and falls.
- Follow or establish safety procedures for [working alone](#), or for avoiding working alone wherever possible.
- Follow or establish procedures for [Working Alone with Patients](#)
- Use appropriate [Personal Protective Equipment](#) for the task, like gloves, respirators, masks, and safety glasses
- Participate in [WHMIS Training](#)
- [Review the safety data sheet \(SDS\)](#) for hazardous products

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