

# Rx Basics: *What Technicians Do*

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When you bring your prescription to a neighborhood pharmacy, the person in the white coat who greets you, enters your prescription data and actually fills your medicine vial is usually a pharmacy technician.

A pharmacy technician's primary job is to receive and fill prescription requests for patients. These prescription requests can come from hospitals, physicians, nurses or directly from the patient. Their work is typically overseen by a licensed pharmacist. The role of pharmacy technicians is critical in the operation of any pharmacy.

Pharmacy technicians working in Texas are required to be actively registered with the Texas State Board of Pharmacy. They must complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain their state registration.

## **Pharmacy Technician Responsibilities**

The preparation of a prescription requires several tasks. A pharmacy technician's duties can include:

- ▶ Retrieving prescription orders
- ▶ Counting, pouring, measuring and weighing tablets, liquids and other medications
- ▶ Mixing medications
- ▶ Selecting the proper prescription container
- ▶ Creating prescription labels

After the prescription is filled, the pharmacy tech prices and files it. A licensed pharmacist then checks the completed prescription before it is given to the patient.

Pharmacy technicians may also do compounding of medications, verbal prescriptions and doctor calls, place medication orders and help manage the pharmacy. At times, pharm techs also advise patients about diet and health requirements. Only licensed pharmacists may counsel patients on the use of medications.

The pharm tech's job also extends to the daily operation of the pharmacy itself, including interactions with hospitals and patients. Non-medication-related duties include preparing insurance claim forms, maintaining patient profiles, completing purchase transactions and answering phones.

## **Training and certification**

Some pharmacy technicians have only on-the-job training, but others have completed a formal training and certification process. The largest national certification exams in the United States are given by the Institute of Certification of Pharmacy Technicians (ICPT) and the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB). PTCB has certified more than 300,000 pharmacy technicians nationwide.

Texas was one of the first states to regulate pharmacy technicians and to require them to register with their state pharmacy board. Texas has more than 38,000 certified technicians, more than twice as many as any other state.