

# Athletic Trainer

## **Professional Activities**

Athletic trainers help prevent and treat injuries for people of all ages. Their clients include everyone from professional athletes to industrial workers. Recognized by the American Medical Association as allied health professionals, athletic trainers specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries. Athletic trainers often are one of the first health care providers on the scene when injuries occur, and therefore they must be able to recognize, evaluate, and assess injuries and provide immediate care when needed. They also are heavily involved in the rehabilitation and reconditioning of injuries. Athletic trainers should not be confused with fitness trainers or personal trainers, who are not health care workers, but rather train people to become physically fit.

Athletic trainers often help prevent injuries by advising on the proper use of equipment and applying protective or injury-preventive devices such as tape, bandages, and braces. Injury prevention also often includes educating people on what they should do to avoid putting themselves at risk for injuries.

Athletic trainers work under the supervision of a licensed physician, and in cooperation with other health care providers. The level of medical supervision varies, depending upon the setting. Some athletic trainers meet with the team physician or consulting physician once or twice a week; others interact with a physician every day. The extent of the supervision ranges from discussing specific injuries and treatment options with a physician to performing evaluations and treatments as directed by a physician.

Working as an athletic trainer requires that the trainer be in contact with others: face-to-face, by phone or otherwise. The trainers spend much of their time indoors and also manipulate the training machines. Some, especially those in some sports-related jobs, spend much of their time working outdoors. The job also might require standing for long periods, working with medical equipment or machinery, and being able to walk, run, kneel, crouch, stoop, or crawl. They are responsible for the health and safety of their clients and coordinate their client's activities.

Schedules vary by work setting. Athletic trainers in non-sports settings generally have an established schedule—usually about 40 to 50 hours per week—with nights and weekends off. Athletic trainers working in hospitals and clinics may spend part of their time working at other locations doing outreach. Most commonly, these outreach programs include conducting athletic training services and speaking at high schools, colleges, and commercial businesses.

Athletic trainers in sports settings have schedules that are longer and more variable. These athletic trainers must be present for team practices and games, which often are on evenings and weekends, and their schedules can change on short notice when games and practices have to be rescheduled. As a result, athletic trainers in sports settings may regularly work 6 or 7 days per week, including late hours.

In high schools, athletic trainers who also teach may work 60 to 70 hours a week, or more. In National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I colleges and universities, athletic trainers generally work with one team; when that team's sport is in season, working at least 50 to 60 hours a week is common. Athletic trainers in smaller colleges and universities often work with several teams and have teaching responsibilities. During

the off-season, a 40-hour to 50-hour work week may be normal in most settings. Athletic trainers for professional sports teams generally work the most hours per week. During training camps, practices, and competitions, they may be required to work up to 12 hours a day.

There is some stress involved with being an athletic trainer, as there is with most health-related occupations. Athletic trainers are responsible for their clients' health, and sometimes have to make quick decisions that could affect the health or career of their clients. Athletics trainers also can be affected by the pressure to win that is typical of competitive sports teams.

### **Educational Requirements**

A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university is required for almost all jobs as an athletic trainer. Students in the athletic programs are educated both in the classroom and in clinical settings. Formal education includes many science and health-related courses, such as human anatomy, physiology, nutrition, and biomechanics.

Athletic trainers may need a master's or higher degree to be eligible for some positions, especially those in colleges and universities, and to increase their advancement opportunities. Because some positions in high schools involve teaching along with athletic trainer responsibilities, a teaching certificate or license could be required.

A majority of the United States requires athletic trainers to be licensed or registered; this requires certification from the Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC). For BOC certification, athletic trainers need a bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited athletic training program and must pass a rigorous examination. To retain certification, credential holders must continue taking medical-related courses and adhere to the BOC standards of practice. In States where licensure is not required, certification is voluntary but may be helpful for those seeking jobs and advancement.

### **Academic Programs**

[Aurora University](#)

[Eastern University](#)

[Illinois State University](#)

[Lewis University](#)

[McKendree University](#)

[Millikin University](#)

[North Central College](#)

[North Park University](#)

[Western Illinois University](#)

### **Employment/Salary Outlook**

Job growth will be concentrated in the healthcare industry, including hospitals and offices of health practitioners. Fitness and recreation sports centers also will provide new jobs, as these establishments grow and continue to need additional athletic trainers to provide support for their clients. Growth in positions with sports teams will be somewhat slower, however, as most professional sports clubs and colleges and universities already have complete athletic training staffs.

The demand for healthcare, with an emphasis on preventive care, should grow as the population ages and as a way to reduce healthcare costs. Increased licensure requirements and regulation has led to a greater acceptance of athletic trainers as qualified healthcare providers. As a result, third-party reimbursement is

expected to continue to grow for athletic training services. Athletic trainers will benefit from this expansion because they provide a cost-effective way to increase the number of health professionals in an office or other setting.

In some States, there are efforts underway to have an athletic trainer in every high school to work with student-athletes, which may lead to growth in the number of athletic trainers employed in high schools. In addition, as more young athletes specialize in certain sports, there is increasing demand for athletic trainers to deal with repetitive stress injuries.

As athletic trainers continue to expand their services, more employers are expected to use these workers to reduce healthcare costs by preventing work-related injuries. Athletic trainers can help prevent injuries and provide immediate treatment for many injuries that do occur. For example, some athletic trainers may be hired to increase the fitness and performance of police and firefighters.

### State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	—	—	—
	Annual	\$36,960	\$48,420	\$76,180
Illinois	Hourly	—	—	—
	Annual	\$37,850	\$50,320	\$86,630

*Note: There is no hourly wage data available for this occupation.*

### State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings <sup>1</sup>
	2020	2030		
Athletic Trainers	30,000	37,300	16%	3,100
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings <sup>1</sup>
	2018	2028		
Athletic Trainers	1,620	1,820	+12%	120

<sup>1</sup>Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

### Professional Organizations

National Athletic Trainers' Association ([nata.org](http://nata.org))

### References

*Occupational Outlook Handbook*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/athletic-trainers.htm>)

O\*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/29-9091.00>)

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