

Surgical Technologists

Professional Activities

Surgical technologists, also called operating room technicians, assist in surgical operations. They prepare operating rooms, arrange equipment, and help doctors during surgeries. Surgical technologists work as members of a healthcare team alongside physicians and surgeons, registered nurses, and other healthcare workers.

Surgical technologists typically do the following:

- Prepare operating rooms for surgery
- Sterilize equipment and make sure that there are adequate supplies for surgery
- Prepare patients for surgery, such as by washing and disinfecting incision sites
- Help surgeons during surgery by passing them instruments and other sterile supplies
- Count supplies such as sponges and instruments to maintain a sterile environment

During an operation, surgical technologists pass instruments and supplies to surgeons and first assistants. They also hold retractors and may hold internal organs in place during the procedure. Technologists also may handle specimens taken for laboratory analysis. Once the operation is complete, surgical technologists may apply bandages and other dressings to the incision site. They may also help transfer patients to recovery rooms and restock operating rooms after a procedure.

Most surgical technologists work full time. Surgical technologists employed in hospitals may work or be on call during nights, weekends, and holidays. They may also be required to work shifts lasting longer than 8 hours. Some work in outpatient care centers or in offices of physicians who perform outpatient surgery

Educational Requirements

Surgical technologists typically need a postsecondary certificate or an associate's degree. Many community colleges and vocational schools, as well as some universities and hospitals, have accredited programs in surgical technology. Programs range in length from several months to 2 years, and they grant a diploma, certificate, or associate's degree upon completion. In addition to classroom study, students also work in supervised clinical settings to gain hands-on experience. Certification can be beneficial in finding a job as a surgical technologist. A small number of states regulate surgical technologists.

Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

Certification can be beneficial in finding a job as a surgical technologist. Surgical technologists may earn certification through two credentialing organizations. Certification through the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting allows the use of the title "Certified Surgical Technologist (CST)." Certification typically requires completing an accredited formal education program or military training program and passing an exam. Certification through the National Center for Competency (NCCT) Testing allows the use of the title "Tech in Surgery-Certified (NCCT)." An applicant must pass an exam and have taken one of several routes to be eligible. These routes include formal education, military training, or work experience, among others. Both certifications require surgical technologists to complete continuing education to maintain their certification.

Academic Programs

[Malcolm X College](#)

[College of Dupage](#)

[College of Lake County](#)
[Midwestern Career College](#)
[Elgin Community College](#)
[Parkland College](#)
[Illinois Central College](#)

[Prairie State College](#)
[Rock Valley College](#)
[John A Logan College](#)
[John Wood Community College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Advances in medical technology have made surgery safer, and more operations are being done to treat a variety of illnesses and injuries. Hospitals will continue to employ surgical technologists to work in operating rooms because they are more cost-effective.

State and National Wages (Surgical Technologists)

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$17.76	\$23.33	\$36.51
	Annual	\$36,930	\$48,530	\$75,940
Illinois	Hourly	\$18.03	\$23.28	\$29.49
	Annual	\$37,500	\$48,420	\$61,330

State and National Trends (Surgical Technologists)

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2021	2031		
Surgical Technologists	110,700	117,200	6	8,300
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Surgical Technologists	3,940	4,230	7%	320

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

Professional Organizations

Association of Surgical Technologists ([ast.org](#))
 National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting ([nbstsa.org](#))
 National Surgical Assistant Association ([nsaa.net](#))
 American Board of Surgical Assistants ([absa.net](#))

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/surgical-technologists.htm>

O*NET OnLine (<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-2055.00>)

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