

Respiratory Physiologist

Respiratory physiologists are involved in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with lung disorders, such as asthma or emphysema. They use a variety of equipment and techniques to investigate respiratory problems.

The Work

You could be:

- investigating a range of symptoms and problems, such as breathing difficulties, abnormal chest x-rays, sleep disorders or chest pains
- carrying out procedures such as pulmonary function tests (checking lung size, efficiency and possible obstructions), exercise testing (to check lung function and oxygen saturation) and bronchial challenge testing (to check for asthma)
- setting up and monitoring sleep disorder diagnostic testing, for patients whose breathing is obstructed when sleeping
- performing special sweat tests (iontophoresis) for diagnosing cystic fibrosis
- using specialised and complex equipment, such as bronchodilators and spirometers
- recording, analysing and interpreting data from tests
- supplying reports to the medical staff who make decisions about treatment
- helping patients with long term treatment, for example administering oxygen or medication
- making sure that all equipment is maintained and calibrated (set up correctly).

Pay

Clinical physiologists (respiratory) who work for the NHS are on Agenda for Change pay scales. The current pay scales are from April 2025. They generally start on Band 5, £34,494 to £42,977 a year.

Senior respiratory physiologists are paid on Band 6, £43,169 to £52,603 a year. Team managers are on Band 7, £52,769 to £61,377 a year

Experienced respiratory physiologists can earn over £50,000 in private healthcare establishments.

Conditions

- You work in the respiratory unit of a hospital, in the outpatient clinics, wards or operating theatre.
- Working hours are normally regular, but you may have to work some weekends and evenings, nights (for sleep clinics) or be on call for emergencies.
- You might sometimes wear protective clothing, for instance when in an operating theatre.
- There might be some lifting of heavy equipment.
- You might travel between hospitals or clinics.
- You would work with patients of all ages.

Getting In

- You should look for a position as an NHS employed practitioner trainee in Clinical Physiology, which are usually posted on [NHS Scotland Recruitment](#) website.
- You require 3 -4 Highers at BBC or BCCC which should include 2 from Maths, Biology, Chemistry or Physics. Employment in an NHS Clinical Physiology department is also an entry requirement for this degree.
- Both trainee and qualified posts are advertised in local press and the NHS jobs websites.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- interested in anatomy and physiology
- good at maths and human biology
- accurate and precise
- good at analysing information
- responsible and decisive
- a good team worker
- able to deal with difficult or distressing situations
- able to use technical equipment.

You should have:

- good hand-to-eye co-ordination and manual dexterity
- good practical skills for using technical equipment
- good communication skills
- an empathetic approach when working with patients
- excellent concentration.

Training

- The degree programme involves block release while employed as a practitioner-level trainee with the NHS. This is usually 2 days a week (term time) academic contact and the rest of the time in post.
- The programme lasts 4 years.
- As a trainee you work with senior staff to gain experience and record progress in a logbook.
- Once training is complete you need to register with the Association for Respiratory Technology and Physiology (ARTP).

Getting On

- Qualified respiratory physiologists can move on to supervisory or managerial posts.
- You can study a postgraduate qualification, after which you might move into research or a more senior post.
- The ARTP runs several courses in specialist areas for experienced respiratory physiologists.

Contacts

Association for Laboratory Medicine

Website: www.acb.org.uk

Association for Respiratory Technology and Physiology (ARTP)

Tel: 0845 226 3062

Email: admin@artp.org.uk

Website: www.artp.org.uk

X: @ARTP_News

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ARTPNews

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.