

WHY RNS
SHOULD CONSIDER A
BSN DEGREE

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Introduction

The nursing workforce represents the largest segment of the healthcare profession. More than 3.8 million registered nurses (RNs) practice nationwide, according to the [American Association of Colleges of Nursing \(AACN\)](#), and that number will grow as the population gets older and more people have better access to healthcare.



Many online
RN-to-BSN
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Because of this demand, more people are pursuing nursing degrees—and RNs are furthering their educations to expand their skill sets, make more money, and seek opportunities to advance their careers.

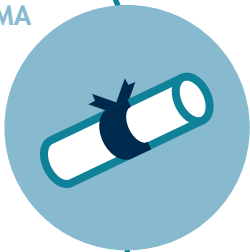
If you have a diploma or an associate's degree in nursing (ADN), you might be thinking about going back to school for your bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN). You've probably heard about the benefits of having a BSN degree, but you might think it's too hard to pursue a degree while working full-time. Many online RN-to-BSN programs, however, make earning your BSN easy and affordable.

Here's an overview of the various ways to enter the nursing profession, the benefits of earning a bachelor's degree in nursing, and how to decide if pursuing a BSN is right for you.

Pathways to Nursing

There's no one-size-fits-all program for educating RNs. There are three educational pathways into the nursing profession: a nursing diploma, an ADN, and a BSN.

NURSING
DIPLOMA



Some prospective RNs choose ADN programs because, typically, it can be a more affordable and faster route to nursing. Being able to complete coursework and clinical hours in just two years is a boon to working professionals and people with families.

ADN



These types of degrees are also excellent ways to start making money quickly. Payscale puts the average salary of a nurse with an ADN degree around \$67,000, but that number can fluctuate depending on your skills and experience.

BSN



The Rise of BSN-Educated Nurses

While ADN programs have their advantages, many nurses are reaping the additional benefits of a BSN degree.



of RNs have a
BSN degree

According to the [AACN](#), the number of registered nurses with BSN degrees is at an all-time high; about 56 percent of RNs have a BSN degree. This number is only expected to grow as states enact legislation requiring nurses to obtain their BSN within 10 years of initial licensure. New York was the first state to pass such a law, [Health Leaders](#) reports; other states, such as New Jersey and Rhode Island, are advancing similar legislation.

The growing percentage of BSN-prepared nurses reflects changing standards of practice. The AACN, the American Nurses Association, and the American Organization of Nurse Executives all recognize a BSN degree as the minimum educational standard for professional nurses.

It's not impossible to get a job in a hospital if you have a diploma or ADN. A BSN, however, offers an advantage over other degree programs. Earning a BSN demonstrates your commitment to safety and evidence-based practice. A BSN can also make you more attractive to potential employers and might even help you get your foot in the door at specialized healthcare organizations.

Benefits of a BSN

As the baby boomer population ages and develops more complex medical conditions, they'll need skilled nurses to care for them. That's one reason healthcare facilities are increasingly drawn to nurses with BSN degrees.

But higher demand in the job market isn't the only benefit of obtaining your BSN. If you have a BSN, you can expect:



Better pay

According to [Payscale](#), the average salary for BSN-educated nurses is around \$81,000.



Better patient outcomes

Research published in the [Journal of Nursing Practice Applications & Reviews of Research](#) indicates that BSN-prepared nurses are more positively associated with better patient outcomes, lower mortality rates, and lower failure-to-rescue rates compared to nurses with other types of degrees.



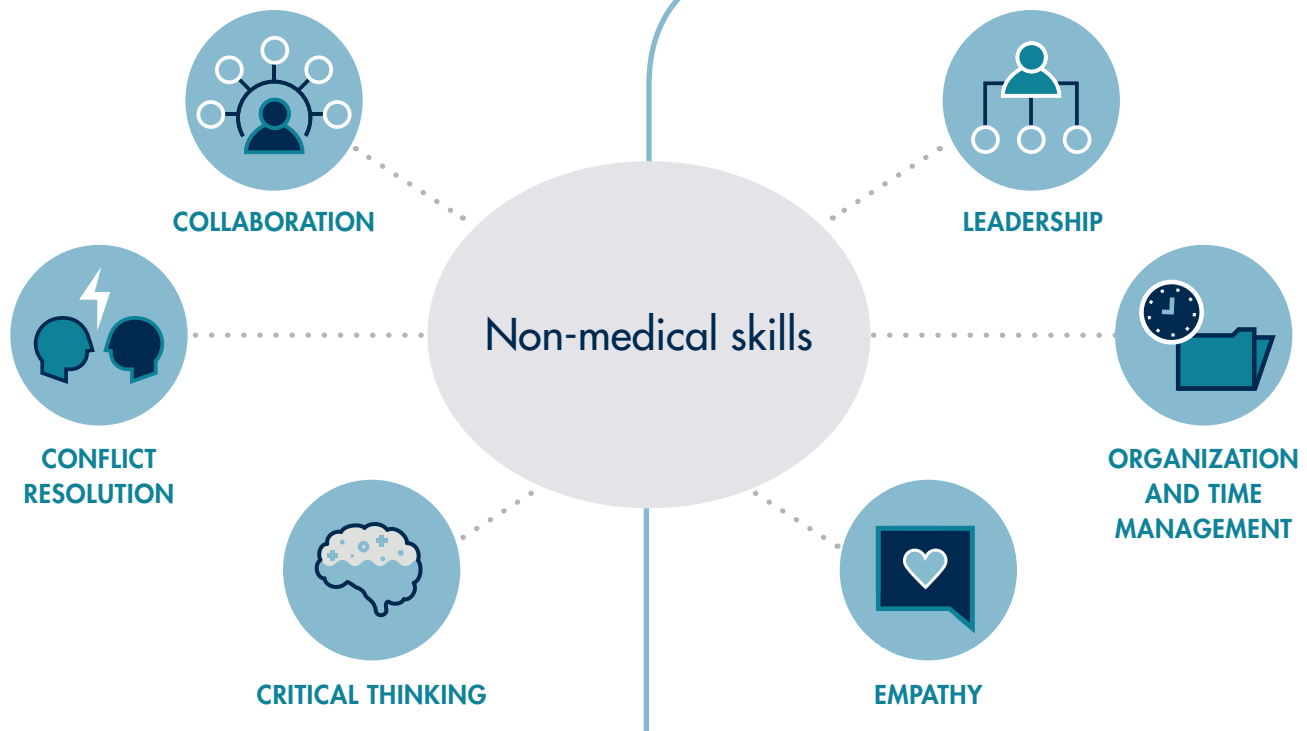
Better job prospects

A [BSN degree](#) opens up more job opportunities in specialty nursing, advanced nursing practice, and managerial and administrative roles.

Benefits of a BSN

Earning a BSN unlocks more than better jobs and better pay, too. In many cases, nurses with BSNs have greater self-esteem, feel more fulfilled in their jobs, and enjoy the challenge of taking on greater responsibility for patient care and administrative tasks. In fact, research published in the [Journal of Transformative Education](#) shows that nurses who have completed RN-to-BSN programs often report feeling more well-rounded and confident in their practice, and also say they have a greater awareness and clarity regarding medical management of complex health issues.

Nurses who earn BSNs also acquire skills that go beyond providing excellent bedside care. In courses focusing on topics like leadership, ethics, and communication, they also develop non-medical skills in areas such as:

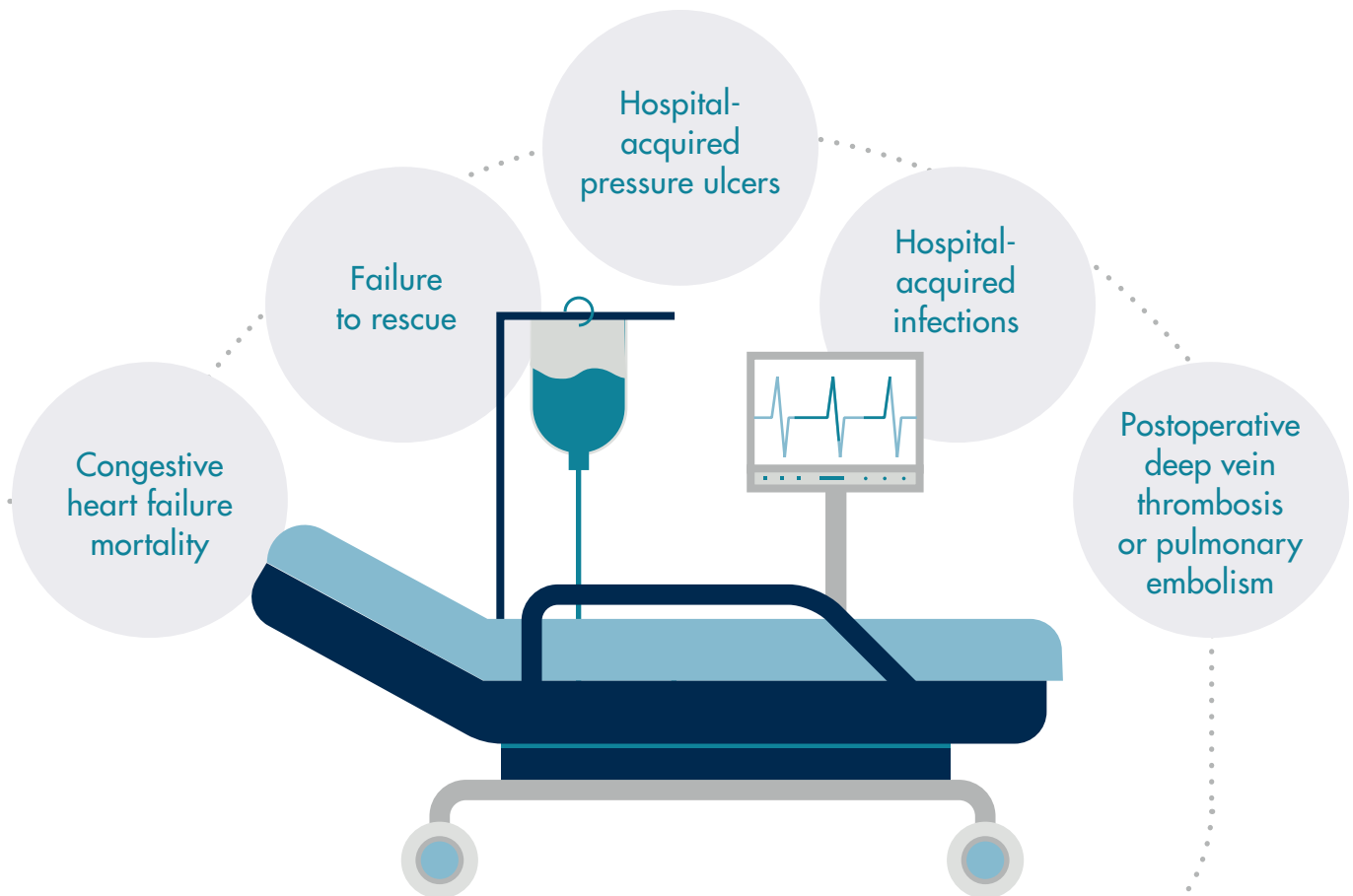


These skills help nurses tackle the unique day-to-day challenges common in healthcare, and when combined with the medical knowledge gained during a BSN program, they can help advance nurses to managerial roles.

BSN-Prepared Nurses and Bedside Care

Regardless of the type of degree they hold, nurses provide the best care possible to patients. Some research, though, indicates that BSN-prepared nurses promote better patient safety and outcomes in their practices.

A 2013 article published in [JONA: Journal of Nursing Administration](#) found that hospitals with a greater percentage of nurses with a bachelor's degree or higher had better patient outcomes across a variety of indicators, including:



BSN-Prepared Nurses and **Bedside Care**



Patient deaths decreased when the number of BSN-prepared nurses increased.

The study also found that patients cared for by RNs with BSN degrees generally spent less time in the hospital.

A 2013 study published in [Health Affairs](#) indicated that for every 10-point increase in the percentage of nurses with a BSN degree within a hospital, two fewer patients in 1,000 died. [Academic Progression in Nursing](#) aggregated several other studies that support these kinds of results, each suggesting that patient deaths decreased when the number of BSN-prepared nurses increased.

The high level of patient care that BSN-prepared nurses bring to healthcare facilities is so beneficial that organizations like the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) have made it a key part of initiatives like their Magnet Recognition Program, which is a designation given to facilities where nursing leaders use their skills to improve patient outcomes. For a facility to be eligible for Magnet Recognition, all of its nursing leaders must hold bachelor's degrees or higher, a requirement that belies the importance of bachelor's-level nursing education.

Effects of Higher Education on the Nursing Workforce

Higher levels of education within the nursing workforce don't just benefit patients, either—nurses also stand to gain from obtaining a BSN. And it's not in the way you might think.



of nurses experience burnout, but having a BSN can help

Higher levels of education within the nursing workforce don't just benefit patients, either—nurses also stand to gain from obtaining a BSN. And it's not in the way you might think.

According to [PRC Custom Research's National Nursing Engagement Report](#), 15.6 percent of nurses experience burnout, and 14 percent of nurses consider themselves unengaged in their work. They've physically clocked in, but they're mentally clocked out. This is a problem.

Nurses holding BSNs are in a better position to combat burnout and compassion fatigue. And with an advanced degree, it's easier to change jobs within your organization. A BSN could help you shift your practice into a specialty you're happier in. Changing jobs could allow you to change your work schedule—and might even come with a pay bump.

Effects of Higher Education on the Nursing Workforce

Obtaining a BSN also helps:

Improve interdisciplinary collaboration and communication

A standard part of the BSN curriculum focuses on leadership, delegation, collaboration, and communication with other members of the healthcare team. These skills are critical for nurses who expect to meet the increasingly complex medical needs of a diverse patient population by collaborating with specialists in other fields. BSN-prepared nurses are also trained to think critically, which is essential when modifying patient care, interpreting test results, and identifying situations in which further support from other healthcare professionals is needed.

Strengthen nursing specialties

Many specialties—including critical care, informatics, oncology, perioperative, and trauma—require BSNs, and so do management and administrative positions. A BSN gives you a leg up over other applicants because it increases your understanding of core competencies. Classes such as pharmacology and pathophysiology, for instance, give you a better understanding of the disease process and how medical interventions help prevent and treat all types of illnesses.

Promote innovation

BSN-prepared nurses receive in-depth training in many areas, including critical thinking, collaboration, and organization, and these skills often translate into healthcare innovations. A 2016 study in [The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing](#) found that with the right education and opportunity, nurses are often heavily involved in creating and implementing healthcare policy advancements, quality improvement initiatives, and educational programs. A BSN prepares you to manage improvement projects and innovate within a healthcare facility.

A BSN is also the first step toward higher education, which can further increase your skill set and earning potential. Many advanced practice nursing roles, such as nurse practitioner and nurse anesthetist, require a master's in nursing or even a PhD—and you'll need a BSN before you pursue either of those degrees.

Exploring Your BSN Options

If you're interested in pursuing your BSN while continuing to work, you're not alone, and you have many options.



Accreditation ensures that the education you receive meets the highest standards of quality and integrity

Online RN-to-BSN degree programs make it easier than ever to obtain the education you need to take your practice to the next level. Online programs are generally more affordable, and they allow you to schedule around your work or family schedule.

Before enrolling in an online program, make sure the program is fully accredited. Accreditation—through organizations such as the [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education](#)—ensures that the education you receive meets the highest standards of quality and integrity. A degree from an accredited program shows prospective employers that you've received your education from an institution committed to providing students with the latest evidence-based knowledge to better serve the public interest.

And if you ever want to transfer schools or pursue an advanced degree, you'd better be sure that your program is accredited. Many schools don't accept transfer credits from programs without accreditation, and higher-ed programs could require you to start from scratch if your undergraduate degree isn't from an accredited university.

How WGU Can Help

BSN-prepared nurses fulfill a vital role in the healthcare delivery system. The demand for BSN-prepared nurses will keep growing, and you can be ready to jump into the job market with an expanded skill set and greater knowledge. WGU is ready to help you take your nursing career to the next level with an advanced degree.

Visit the

[WGU College of Health Professions Degrees page](#)

and explore the many options offered by the institution.