

Profession Profile: Medical Laboratory Technician



AMT
American Medical Technologists
Certifying Excellence in Allied Health

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Medical laboratory technicians collect samples and perform tests to analyze body fluids, tissue and other substances. They play a vital role in the diagnosis and prevention of disease.

Duties

Medical laboratory technicians perform less complex routine tests and laboratory procedures that are more automated, such as:

- Prepare specimens for testing
- Analyze body fluids, such as blood, urine, and tissue samples and record normal or abnormal findings
- Use automated equipment and computerized instruments capable of performing a number of tests at the same time
- Work under the supervision of medical laboratory technologists or laboratory managers



Education and Training

Medical laboratory technicians generally have either an associate degree from a community or junior college; a vocational or technical school; or the Armed Forces. Those technicians that learned their skills on the job must also meet the educational requirements, and the necessary semester hours of training.

Choosing an Accredited Program

Nationally recognized agencies that accredit medical laboratory technician programs include agencies such as the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and The National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS).

Licensure: Some states require medical laboratory technicians to be licensed or registered. Information on licensure is available from state departments of health or boards of occupational licensing.

Certification: Many employers prefer applicants who are certified by a recognized professional association, such as the American Medical Technologists.

Advancement: Medical laboratory technicians can advance and become technologists through additional education and experience. Technologists may advance to supervisory positions in laboratory work or may become chief technologists or laboratory managers in hospitals. Manufacturers of home diagnostic testing kits and laboratory equipment and supplies also seek experienced technologists to work in product development, marketing and sales. Professional certification, specialization and/or a graduate degree in medical technology, one of the biological sciences, chemistry, management or education usually speeds advancement.

Is It Right For You?

Employers seek medical laboratory technicians with good analytical judgment and the ability to work under pressure. Close attention to detail is also essential for medical laboratory technicians because small differences or changes in test substances or numerical readouts can be crucial to a diagnosis. Manual dexterity and normal color vision are highly desirable, and with the widespread use of automated laboratory equipment, computer skills are important.

Employment

Medical laboratory technicians held about 163,400 jobs in 2014. Employment is expected to grow by 18 percent between 2014 and 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. An increase in the aging population will lead to a greater need to diagnose medical conditions, such as cancer or type 2 diabetes, through laboratory procedures. Medical laboratory technicians will be needed to use and maintain the equipment needed for diagnosis and treatment.

Salary

The median annual wage of medical laboratory technicians was \$38,950 in May 2016. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$26,010, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$61,720. In general, salaries are higher in a hospital setting than in physician offices.

Want To Learn More?

Visit the US Bureau of Labor Statistics:

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-and-clinical-laboratory-technologists-and-technicians.htm>