

Medical Laboratory Technician...a career for you!



"I had been looking into going to medical school before learning about this field. I originally chose this career as a kind of stepping stone, but it has turned into so much more. I especially like finding out the "whys" in disease diagnosis."

Tracy Donahue, MLT(ASCP)

The challenges and rewards of medicine and science--the medical laboratory technician has the best of both worlds.

A medical laboratory technician performs general tests in all laboratory areas. Working under the supervision of a medical technologist, a medical laboratory technician hunts for clues to the absence, presence, extent, and causes of diseases.

Medical laboratory technicians must be accurate, dedicated and skilled. They must also be self-motivated, to take initiative to do what must be done everyday--to pitch in to help the healthcare team.

What it takes to become a Medical Laboratory Technician

All medical laboratory technicians have certain common characteristics. They are problem-solvers. They like challenge and responsibility. They are accurate, reliable, emotionally stable, work well under pressure and are able to finish a task once started. They

communicate well, both in writing and speaking. They set high standards for themselves and expect quality in the work they do. But, above all, they are deeply committed to their profession, and are truly fascinated by all that science has to offer.

For someone who chooses a career as a medical laboratory technician, the exploration never ends.

To prepare for a career as a medical laboratory technician, you should have a solid foundation in high school sciences--biology, chemistry, math and computer science. You'll need a combination of formal education plus clinical education in a medical laboratory technician (MLT) program accredited by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS). Over 200 community colleges and approximately 40 hospitals offer these programs.

With a career as a medical laboratory technician, you'll have unlimited choices. Unlike many other careers, your education in medical laboratory technology will prepare you directly for a job.

While you're going to school, you can work part-time in a laboratory to earn extra money. And you could start working full-time the day after you graduate.

For an exciting career as a medical laboratory technician, you'll need an Associate Degree.

See "NAACLS Accredited Programs" for information on how you can learn more about NAACLS programs in medical laboratory technology.

Where Medical Laboratory Technicians Work

Medical laboratory technicians have an unlimited choice of practice settings. Hospitals, for-profit laboratories, clinics, nursing homes, public health facilities, business and industry currently have positions open for qualified medical laboratory technicians.

Today, there are more jobs for laboratory personnel than educated people to fill those jobs. The future long-term employment looks bright--well into the next century.

The national average salary median for medical laboratory technicians is approximately \$23,100, although salaries vary by area of the country.

Opportunities for Advancement

A medical laboratory technician who earns a baccalaureate degree and either has three years of experience or attends a NAACLS accredited Medical Technologist program, can become a Medical Technologist.

The Medical Technologist performs a full range of laboratory tests, from the most routine to the most complex, with little or no supervision. Medical technologists can be teachers, supervisors or researchers.

Certification

To be sure that laboratory workers are competent and able to perform high quality laboratory tests, the Board of Registry of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists gives a national certification exam. Students take this exam after meeting their academic and laboratory education requirements. Those that pass the exam for medical laboratory technician may use the initials, MLT(ASCP) after their name.



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