

Adult nurses

The main focus for adult nurses is people who are 18 years or over, although they must be able to provide safe essential care to people of all ages. Their main role is with adults, including young adults, those in their middle and later years, and older people in their nineties and beyond.

Adult nurses care for people who are ill, recovering from accident or illness, or learning to live with a disability. They also help to keep people mentally and physically healthy.

Adult nurses also need to have a basic understanding of pregnancy and birth, so that they can act in an emergency to help pregnant women or care for them when they need medical or surgical nursing.

Adult nurses work in partnership with individuals, families, carers and groups who may have a wide range of health care needs. This means the adult nurse has a wide range of skills and expertise. Adult nurses work in hospitals, in the community and in people's homes.

They practise in a wide range of settings, either providing or supervising care themselves, or working alongside other professionals to deliver care. Adult nurses might work in health centres, in industry, in prisons, in the military, or in specialist services like blood transfusion or health screening.

They may also work with groups of people who need more specialist services, such as homeless people, disabled people or people who are dying.

Adult nurses also provide a high standard of essential personal care, with dignity and compassion, while also being able to undertake complex interventions and use specialist skills.

Once qualified, adult nurses might extend their skills, for example, to run asthma or obesity clinics, to give travel health advice, or to provide highly technical care in specialist units.

In the future, adult nurses will probably provide as much care away from the hospital setting as they will within it. They will increasingly support more people with long term conditions, such as dementia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and stroke, while also providing interventions for shorter term medical and surgical care in hospitals, health centres or in people's own homes.

They must recognise when someone's health is deteriorating and respond quickly in an emergency.

Adult nurses also care for people who have life threatening illnesses, such as cancer, or require intensive care after a heart attack or major operation. They are able to deliver technical nursing treatment while providing psychological support to the patient, their family and their carers.

They also have the skills to help people who are coming to the end of their lives. They are able to manage care and make sure that people are comfortable and pain free. They care for people with all levels of dependency.

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