

Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians

Surgical Technologists

Surgical Technologists assist and work under the supervision of surgeons, registered nurses and other members of the surgery team. Surgical technologists help prepare the operating room by setting up sterile equipment, drapes, solutions and checking to see if the surgical tools are working properly. They help prepare the patient for surgery by washing, shaving, and disinfecting surgical sites, and transporting the patient to the operating room and onto the operating table. Surgical technologists also monitor vital signs, check patient charts and assist the surgical team in applying sterile gowns and gloves. During surgery a surgical technologist passes equipment to the surgeon and his assistants, counting tools and sponges used, and may help in holding surgical tools and transporting specimens. After the surgery the technologist helps transfer the patient to the recovery room and is responsible for restocking the operating room.

Through additional training a certified surgical technologist can advanced to a surgical first assistant or a circulating technologist. A surgical first assistant aids the surgeon in performing a safe operation by helping to control exposure and controlling blood flow in order to prevent a hemorrhage. A circulating technologist prepares the patient for surgery, helps with anesthesia, opens packages for the sterile members of the surgical team, keeps a written account of the surgery, and provides information to the surgeon about the patient.

Surgical technologists work in clean, well-lit, and cool areas. They must stand and remain alert for long periods of time and may be exposed to infectious diseases. They typically work 40 hours a week but are often on call nights, weekends, and holidays. Surgical technologists must be able to respond quickly to the surgeon during the surgery and possess a deep understanding of the surgical procedure so that they can have tools ready for the surgeon without being asked for them.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

To become a surgical technologist one needs to receive formal training in a surgical technology program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Accredited programs are offered by community colleges, vocational schools, universities, hospitals, and the military. The program lasts anywhere from 9 - 24 months and can result in a certificate or degree. High school graduation is requirement for admission into these programs.

Certification for surgical technologists is voluntary but beneficial because most employers prefer to hire certified technologists. There are two organizations a surgical

technologist can gain certification from are the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA), and the National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT).

Requirements for certification from the NBSTSA:

- Graduation from an accredited CAAHEP program
- Passing a national certification examination
- Certification results in the title Certified Surgical Technologist (CST)
- In order to maintain certification one must complete 60 hours of continuing education or retake and pass the national exam every 4 years

Requirements for certification through the NCCT include:

- Passing the examination taken by the NCCT
- Qualifications to take this exam are:
 1. Complete an accredited training program **OR**
 2. Undergo a 2-year hospital on-the-job training program **OR**
 3. Have 7 years of experience working as a surgical technologist
- Certification results in the title Tech in Surgery-Certified, TS-C (NCCT)
- In order to maintain certification, one must complete continuing education courses or retake the exam every 5 years.

More Information on Certification:

- The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA):
<http://www.nbstsa.org/>
- National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT):
<http://www.ncctinc.com/>

Average Costs:

NBSTSA Certification Cost: \$190 - \$290, plus the cost of any exam study aids

NCCT Certification Cost: \$155 - \$195, plus the cost of any exam study aids

Costs of continuing education vary by program.

* Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.