

## REQUISITE SKILLS AND ABILITIES FOR REGISTERED NURSES

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The information provided below is intended to assist individuals considering entry into a Nursing Program at the University of Alberta to determine if they have the physical and mental health attributes that will support success in a nursing education program. During a nursing program students must participate in clinical practice courses which require performance of physically and mentally challenging activities similar to those skills required of a practicing Registered Nurse (RN). This information is based on the essential skills for Registered Nurses identified by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: <http://www10.hrsdc.gc.ca/ES/English/ShowProfile.aspx?v=305> and Requisite Skills and Abilities for Becoming a Registered Nursing in Alberta: [http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna-Admin/Uploads/Requisite\\_Skills\\_Abilities\\_%20May\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna-Admin/Uploads/Requisite_Skills_Abilities_%20May_2011.pdf). The information provided below is intended as a summary, for comprehensive information prospective students are encouraged to go to the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada webpage and the CARNA website. At the end of this document are questions that will help you determine if you can participate in the activities identified.

Nursing programs require students to participate in classroom, laboratory and clinical practice settings in order to achieve the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to practice as a Registered Nurse (RN) upon graduation. After completing their nursing program students must write a licensing exam and register with the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) (or the equivalent in another jurisdiction) to practice as a Registered Nurse.

Registered Nurses work with patients/clients to promote health and to assist patients to cope with illness. As nursing students progress in their nursing program they will be required to participate in clinical courses that take place in a variety of clinical settings and the complexity of clinical learning environment increases. RNs provide holistic nursing care to patients which address physical, emotional, psychosocial and spiritual needs.

### PHYSICAL ABILITIES

Clinical practice is physically demanding. Nursing students must be in excellent physical condition to prevent injury to themselves and/or their patient. Nursing students are required to lift and transfer patients, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, carry equipment and move equipment. Direct patient care requires Registered Nurses to be on their feet for long periods of time. Patients vary in the degree to which they can assist with movement.

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Stand and maintain balance when performing a variety of tasks
- Lift patients and move equipment
- Perform repetitive movements such as those required in cardiac compression (CPR)
- Run or walk quickly in emergency situations

Psychomotor Skills (ability to perform specific movements required to complete a task)

Registered Nurses are required to perform complex nursing skills which require manual dexterity.

Examples of such skills are: preparing and administering an injection, maintaining sterile technique while changing a wound dressing, setting up and maintaining intravenous pumps, removing sutures, and inserting and removing urinary catheters and intravenous catheters.

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Perform fine motor movements such as picking up a cotton ball with tweezers
- Draw up a solution into a syringe
- Perform a task which involves many steps

Hearing Abilities

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Identify and differentiate sounds related to heart, lung, or other body systems
- Hear and respond to equipment alarms used to monitor patients
- Hear verbal communications from frail patients

Visual Abilities

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Read labels on medication products
- Read textbooks, articles, and computer screens
- See details in objects that are less than an arm's length away
- Utilize a computer or write information related to patient care and treatments
- Record information on graphic sheets

Communication Skills

English Language Requirement

Nursing students must demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English. English is the primary language of instruction at the University of Alberta and in the Canadian health care system. Registered Nurses require a high level of English language skills to effectively communicate with patients and other healthcare professionals.

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Communicate effectively, accurately and clearly in English in rapidly changing environments in both verbal and written format. Communication occurs with patients, family members, and other members of the health care team
- Hear and understand the speech of frail individuals
- Recognize non-verbal communication from others and the associated meaning

#### Emotional Health

Registered Nurses work in highly stressful environments with individuals who are experiencing life-changing events. They must be able to manage their own mental health in order to provide safe, competent nursing care.

Registered Nurses must be able to:

- Provide nursing care in a stressful, rapidly changing environment
- Provide safe, competent, ethical nursing care in a challenging, stressful environment

#### Cognitive (Thinking) Skills

Registered Nurses must be able to apply information from textbooks and other sources to variable situations in a safe competent manner.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING A REGISTERED NURSE

#### Latex Exposure

Clinical environments contain latex products. Latex is derived from rubber plants. It is impossible for students participating in clinical courses not to potentially be exposed to latex products. Individuals who are sensitive to latex products or who experience life-threatening reactions to latex are strongly discouraged from pursuing a nursing program.

#### Blood Borne Pathogen Disease

Examples of blood borne diseases include: Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Registered Nurses may be required to perform exposure prone activities with patients infected with blood borne pathogens. Students who have a blood borne disease may need to have their program altered to protect patients.

#### Communicable Diseases

Registered Nurses may be exposed to patients with various diseases or infections. It is essential that Registered Nurses skin be intact and that she/he be able wash her/his hands frequently with water or alcohol based cleanser.

### Shift Work

Registered Nurses commonly work shifts and may be required to work extended shifts (12 hour shifts).

Registered Nurses also commonly are required to work weekends. Examples of common shifts are:

#### *Eight Hour Shifts*

Day shift: 7:00 am to 3:15 pm

Evening shift: 3:00 pm to 11:15 pm

Night shift: 11:00 pm to 7:15 am

#### *12 Hour shifts:*

Day shift: 7:00 am to 7:15 pm

Night shift: 7:00 pm to 7:15 am

### Chemical Exposure

Hospital environments contain a variety of chemicals to which Registered Nurses can potentially be exposed. Safety precautions are implemented to limit exposure to chemicals.

### General Work Environment

Registered Nurses must function in a work environment that could include: noxious smells, noise, distractions and unpredictable behaviour of others. The environment can be challenging when the Registered Nurse is trying to focus and maintain safety of oneself and others.

Registered Nurses perform many activities which are physically demanding and repetitive. Health care environments may be ergonomically challenging. That is, nursing activities may require stretching to reach across a patient's bed to help move a patient. Common transfers involve moving a patient from bed to a stretcher, from bed to a wheelchair, or from bed to a chair. If proper lifting and transferring techniques are not used it may result in injury.

### References

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (n.d.) Essential skills Registered Nurses NOC 3152  
Retrieved from <http://www10.hrsdc.gc.ca/ES/English/ShowProfile.aspx?v=305>

College & Association of Registered Nursing of Alberta. (2011). Requisite skills and Abilities for becoming A Registered Nursing in Alberta. Retrieved from: [http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna-Admin/Uploads/Requisite\\_Skills\\_Abilities\\_%20May\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna-Admin/Uploads/Requisite_Skills_Abilities_%20May_2011.pdf)

**SELF ASSESSMENT OF REQUISITE SKILLS AND ABILITIES FOR REGISTERED NURSES**

After reviewing the preceding information, complete the questions below:

<b>Question</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I do not suffer from any leg/back injuries or any leg/back injuries are effectively managed		
I am able to easily lift 45 pounds (20 kilograms) for up to 30 seconds		
I am able to stand on my feet for long periods of time (60 minutes) without requiring a break		
I am able to write legibly with a pen		
I am able to perform computer keyboarding		
I am able to hold a cup of liquid steady for 30 seconds		
I am able to perform complex procedures that require hand-eye coordination		
I am able to perform a task that has multiple different steps		
I am able to hear a microwave beep		
I am able to hear a whispered conversation		
I am able to read information on a prescription label		
I am able to read information on a computer screen		
I am able to easily comprehend directions given in English in a busy environment		
I am able to communicate with other effectively in spoken English		
I am able to write in English to effectively communicate my observations		
I am able to provide emotional support to others in a stressful or changing environment		
I do not suffer from uncontrolled emotional or psychiatric problems		
I can work effectively in a stressful environment		
I am able to use problem solving skills to resolve an issue		
I am able to solve mathematical problems that involve division and ratios		
I do not have a skin disorder that would prevent me from washing my hands frequently		
I do not suffer from any health conditions that has resulted in lower immunity to disease		
I do not have a latex sensitivity		
I do not suffer from any blood borne pathogen disease		

**If you have answered “NO” to any of the above questions please contact Karen Peterson, Clinical Placement Coordinator, at the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing by email at: [karen.peterson@ualberta.ca](mailto:karen.peterson@ualberta.ca) to discuss your concern.**

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