Respiratory therapists work with doctors and other healthcare professionals to evaluate, treat and care for patients who have breathing and other cardiopulmonary disorders. They also perform diagnostic tests and limited physical examinations. Therapists utilize complex, specialized equipment to help people breathe.

They work with patients ranging in age from infants to senior citizens. Respiratory therapists work under the supervision of physicians. Most respiratory therapists are employed in hospitals. They also work in nursing care facilities and physician offices.

Therapists often treat patients with oxygen and oxygen mixtures, aerosol medications and chest physiotherapy. They provide treatments that give temporary relief for problems such as emphysema and chronic asthma. They also give emergency care to patients for heart attacks, strokes, shock and drowning. Some therapists, employed in hospitals, might work in intensive care or critical care units.

Some of the duties of therapists and technicians overlap, however the therapists have more responsibility. Therapists provide more complex therapies which need independent judgment. Respiratory therapists also consult with doctors and other healthcare personnel in order to create and modify the treatment strategies for patients.

In some hospitals respiratory therapists are involved with duties that are not traditionally part of the profession such as pulmonary resuscitation, disease prevention and smoking cessation counseling.

Data Source: CityTownInfo.com