

INFORMATION PACKET

CHOOSING A CAREER AS A WOC NURSE



WOCN[®]

Wound, Ostomy, and
Continence Nurses Society[®]

Nursing is the largest healthcare profession in the United States, with a high-demand for specialized registered nurses (RNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs).

Choosing a nursing specialty is a personal decision that requires careful consideration. With hundreds of nursing specialties to choose from, take time to understand the credentials, skill sets, personality traits, and daily demands required of each specialty to identify the best nursing avenue for you.

As the U.S. population ages, the need for wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nurses is increasing, making the WOC nursing specialty a lucrative nursing specialty to choose. This Information Packet will help you understand what it means to choose a career as a WOC nurse so you can determine if it's right for you.

WHAT'S INSIDE

WHAT IS A WOC NURSE?

A DAY IN THE LIFE

CORE VALUES OF THE WOC NURSE

BECOMING A WOC NURSE

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

SUPPORT FOR GETTING STARTED

WHAT IS A WOC NURSE?

Wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nurses are experts in caring for patients with wounds, ostomies, and incontinence. Specifically, WOC nurses respond to the acute and rehabilitative needs of people with select gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and integumentary systems disorders.

They provide direct care to people with abdominal stomas, wounds, fistulas, drains, pressure injuries, and/or continence disorders and can serve as educators, consultants, researchers, and administrators.

A WOC nurse is a Registered Nurse (RN) who holds a Baccalaureate Degree or higher and completes a formal, accredited WOC full scope or special education program.

MOST COMMON DUTIES INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Providing oversight of wound care to assist other healthcare providers in management of acute and chronic wounds
- Educating patients on wound care, infection, and injury prevention
- Providing and interpreting evidence-based tools for staff nurses for decision support
- Educating the individual/family/caregiver on how to change, empty, and manage the pouching system; normal function of the ostomy; normal characteristics of the stoma and peristomal skin; and signs of complications to report to their healthcare provider
- Treating stomal and peristomal skin complications
- Navigating resources for patient supplies to reduce ED visits
- Providing follow-up care post-discharge
- Collaborating with surgeons, infection prevention practitioners, and other members of the interdisciplinary team
- Performing focused assessments including relevant history to identify risks, contributive factors, and reversible causes on incontinence
- Providing value to their institution with regards to the effect of patient outcomes including, but not limited to: reducing instances of catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI), hospital-acquired pressure injury (HAPI), and improving urinary and bowel incontinence
- Advocating for reimbursement of supplies, services, and access to long-term support

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A WOC NURSE

WOC nurses can practice full-time or part-time in a variety of care settings.

WOC nurses are needed in settings where patients experience immobility, such as their homes or long- and short-term care settings. There is no standard schedule for a WOC nurse. Some nurses may choose to work 10-hour days while others may only have a few hours per week to dedicate to the job.

The profession has been described as challenging, rigorous, stable, flexible, and rewarding.

ATTRIBUTES OF WOC NURSES

RESPECT	EMOTIONAL MATURITY
PATIENCE	PASSION
COMPASSION	DETAIL-ORIENTED
COMMUNICATION	ADVOCATE

TYPICAL EMPLOYERS & SETTINGS

- ✓ Hospitals
- ✓ Hospices
- ✓ Home Health Agencies
- ✓ Outpatient Centers
- ✓ Public Health Agencies
- ✓ Nursing Homes

DAILY CHALLENGES

- Daily, often dynamic, workload changes
- Juggling multiple hats (managing supplies, managing telehealth appointments, cross-communication with multi-disciplinary teams and sometimes serving as a nurse, social worker, case manager, and preceptor on any given day)
- Staffing constraints and not being able to spend as much time with each patient

DAILY REWARDS

- Seeing the daily impact made with patient care
- Viewing the visual impact of healing with each patient
- Witnessing patients adjust to their care schedules and thrive
- Assisting with patients as they regain their health and quality of life
- Assisting with recovery and discharge

CORE VALUES OF THE WOC NURSE

Core values that guide the professional practice of the WOC nurse include integrity, leadership, and knowledge. These values¹ are demonstrated by the following beliefs and behaviors.



INTEGRITY

WOC nurses are uncompromised in their dedication to being a trusted, unbiased, and credible source of evidence-based information, care, and expertise.



LEADERSHIP

WOC nurses are stewards of excellence with a common passion for mutual respect, shared experiences, and lifelong learning.



KNOWLEDGE

WOC nurses demonstrate a continued commitment to education and research to generate and disseminate knowledge that improves patient outcomes.

TESTIMONIALS FROM WOC NURSES



I love my job because every day is different. There is always something new to learn, even as an experienced CWOCN. As a WOC nurse, I can make a difference for the individual, their family, my organization (WOCN®), and society as a whole to improve quality of life and quality of care for those with WOC needs.

– JODY S.



I love my job as it allows me to make an impact on a patients' care. In addition, I value the opportunity that I have to work collaboratively with staff and physicians and mentor my colleagues and educate them on the value a WOC nurse brings to patient care.

– VICKY L.



For me I love this job because I am challenged every day. I love the relationship I have with my patients, doctors, nurses, and vendors. Using resources that WOCN® provides is also always an asset. I can't see myself doing anything else!

– VASHTI L.

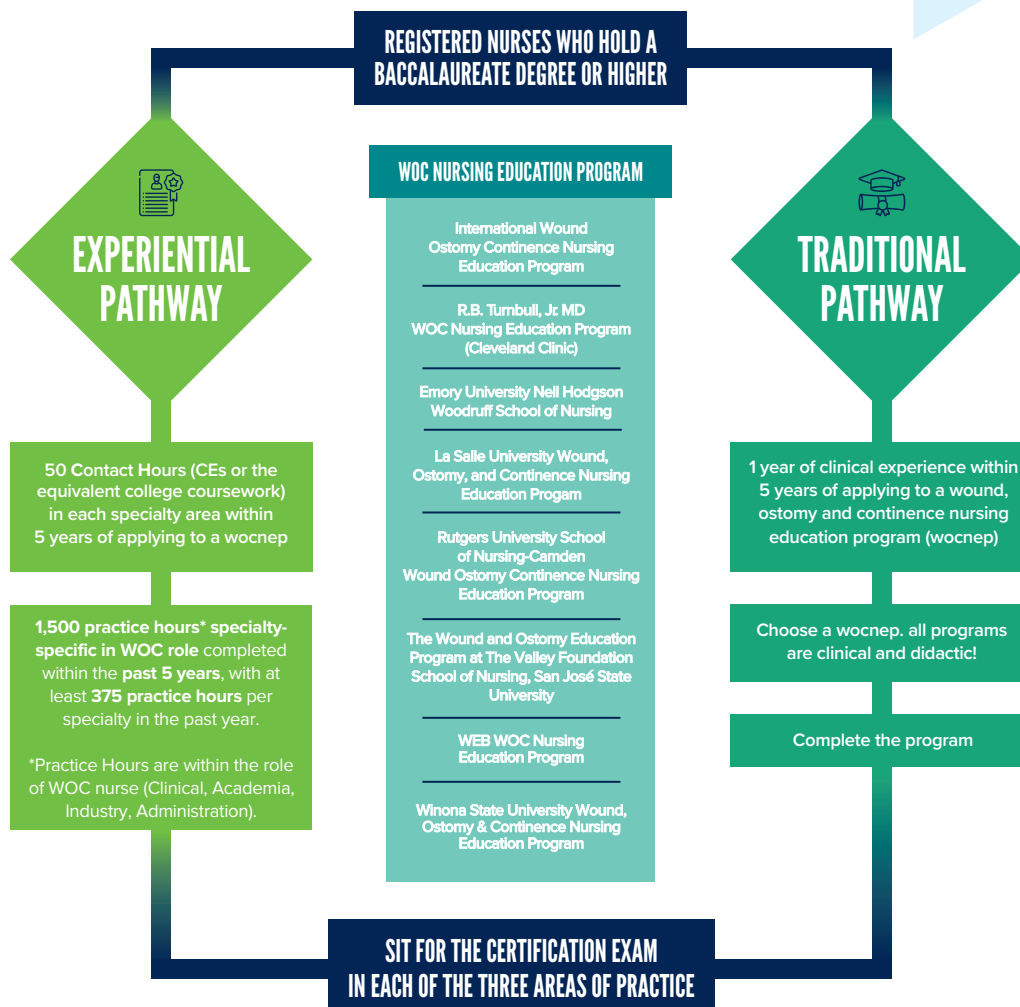
HOW TO BECOME A WOC NURSE

WOC nurses are registered nurses who hold a baccalaureate degree or higher and have completed additional education focused on wounds, ostomies, and/or continence care.

THE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE

- 1 Earn a Baccalaureate degree or higher in nursing
 - 2 Earn your Registered Nurse (RN) degree from an accredited program
 - 3 Choose an experiential or traditional pathway to gain first-hand knowledge
 - 4 Obtain WOC Nursing Certification by an accredited organization.
- Formal education is provided by WOC Nursing Education Programs (WOCNEPs) accredited by the WOCN Society

EXPERIENTIAL VS. TRADITIONAL PATHWAYS



EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR WOC NURSES

The employment outlook for WOC nurses is positive. Many factors currently contribute to an increased need for WOC nurses and a heightened focus by healthcare organizations on wound prevention. It's an expanding field with abundant opportunities for jobs in your desired setting and career growth.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A POSITIVE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK:

- The wide range of injuries and conditions WOC nurses treat
- The aging U.S. population as seniors are most susceptible to wounds
- The growing prevalence of obesity and diabetes in the U.S., which have links to wounds, skin integrity, and continence.

With the demand for WOC nurses rising, professionals can expect salaries to increase as well. The average national salary for a Certified WOC nurse is **\$83,805** per year in the United States.³ Salaries can vary significantly by geography, state-demand, credentials, and experience.

GET STARTED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE WOCN SOCIETY™

Founded in 1968, the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) is the largest and most recognized professional nursing community dedicated to advancing the practice and delivery of expert healthcare to individuals with wound, ostomy, and continence care needs.

The WOCN Society provides information regarding accredited WOC nursing education programs, plus:



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WOC certifications, free courses, clinical tools, career center



LEARNING RESOURCES

Publications, bookstore, documents, podcasts, newsletters



NETWORKING

Conferences, events, forums, volunteering, local and regional chapters



ADVOCACY

Advocacy initiatives, healthcare agenda, public policy resources

**VISIT [WOCN.ORG](https://www.wocn.org) TODAY AND EXPERIENCE WHAT IT MEANS
TO BE A PART OF THE WOC COMMUNITY OF OPPORTUNITY™!**



(888) 224-9626 | INFO@WOCN.ORG | WOCN.ORG
1120 ROUTE 73 SUITE 200, MT. LAUREL, NJ 08054

1. Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society. (2018). *Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing: Scope and standards of Practice, 2nd Edition*. Mt. Laurel, NJ: Author.

2. Smiley, R.A., Lauer, P., Bienemy, C., Berg, J.G., Shireman, E., Reneau, K.A., & Alexander, M. (October 2018). The 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 9(3), supplement (S1-S54).

3. Indeed (February 2022). Wound Care Nurse Salary in United States.