

# Examine the Possibilities

Dramatic growth in the healthcare field has left many communities in need of more nurses. Could one of these jobs be right for you?

By Stacey White

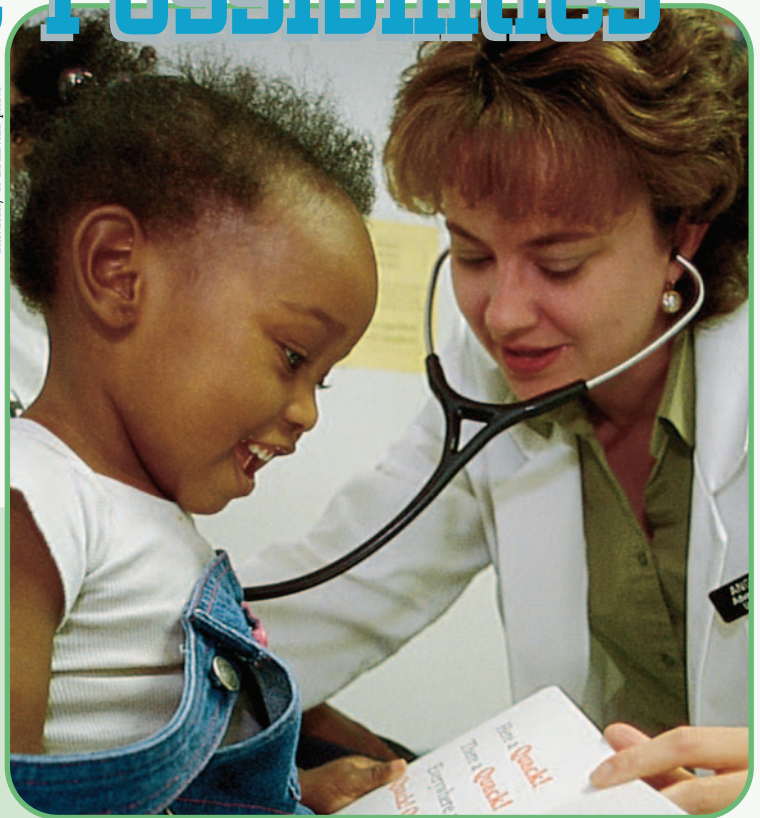
You've seen the pictures: masses of sick people waiting outside a dark hut to get medical attention from one or two scrub-clad individuals. The medical shortages across the world leave many unsettling images in our hearts and minds, but today those horrors are coming home.

Recent statistics indicate that 53 percent of America's physicians cited "shortage of nurses" as the leading cause of medical errors. In turn, thousands of lives have been lost every year. The problem grows, as only 10 percent of today's nursing force is under 30 years of age, drastically increasing the shortage as time goes on. Already, 75 percent of hospital vacancies are for nursing positions; by 2010, an estimated one million new and replacement nurses will be needed.

For today's graduating high school student, these statistics are not all bad news. Because of this shortage, nurses today are almost guaranteed jobs right out of college and can be assured of a secure future. The average entry-level nurse makes between \$31,000 and \$41,000 dollars a year, with recent incentive programs raising salaries with experience. Another advantage is flexibility, as graduating nurses can go into almost any nursing field they choose.

And a wide field it is, offering job opportunities in and out of the hospital. Science and technology are mixed with compassion and caring as nurses make assessments on the physical and emotional

well being of patients, diagnose their cases, plan their care, teach, give meds, evaluate, adjust, and examine. Nurses of any race, gender, and



University of Louisville photo

age work bedside care in the emergency room, the ambulance, in trauma wards, x-ray units, intensive care units, surgical units, pediatrics, neonatal ICU, and in laboratories.

There are thousands of jobs across the country for nurses outside of the hospital as well. Become a military medic, join the Peace Corps, or do international service. Work as a nurse on a cruise ship, in an elementary school, with a university clinic, or in a dentist's office. Join a research center, a pharmaceutical company, an insurance company, or become a part of a long-term care center or community health clinic.

The first requirements in the nursing field revolve simply around interest and personality. Leadership, organizational, and people skills are essential, as are patience, flexibility and compassion. Most local hospitals have high school volunteer programs ready to help you explore your interest in nursing. Besides taking your SAT or ACT, many colleges require a NLN Pre-Admissions Exam (see your guidance counselor). If you're interested in being a nurse, it's important to apply to a state-approved and accredited school of nursing.

You want to make a difference in the world. You've thought about teaching. Or maybe business. Social work sound appealing? What about being a doctor? Think about nursing: security for your future and security for the world's. 🌱

## Median Salaries for Kentucky Nurses

**Licensed Practical Nurse:** \$34,254  
**Staff Nurse – Emergency Room:** \$45,940  
**Nurse Practitioner:** \$63,788  
**Nurse Anesthetist:** \$102,956

Source: Salary.com