

# Pharmacists

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Working as a Pharmacist [NOC 2021: 31120/ NOC 2016: 3131]

### ***Job Description***

Community and hospital pharmacists compound and dispense prescribed pharmaceuticals and provide consultative services to clients and health care providers.

As a **Pharmacist** you perform some or all of the following duties:

- Check prescriptions for proper dosage
- Compound prescribed pharmaceutical products by calculating, measuring and mixing the quantities of drugs and other ingredients required and filling appropriate containers with correct quantity
- Dispense prescribed pharmaceuticals to customers or to other health care professionals and advise them on indications, contra-indications, adverse effects, drug interactions and dosage
- Maintain medication profiles of customers including registry of poisons and narcotic and controlled drugs

As an **Industrial Pharmacist** you perform some or all of the following duties:

- Participate in research for the development of new drugs
- Coordinate different types of clinical and non-clinical tests during the development of new drugs

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- Provide quality control services during the manufacturing of drug products, ensuring that they meet potency, purity, uniformity, stability and safety standards
- Promote pharmaceutical products and the development of informational materials for other health care professionals, other pharmacists and the general public
- Participate in research for the development of new drugs
- Coordinate different types of clinical and non-clinical tests during the development of new drugs
- Provide quality control services during the manufacturing of drug products, ensuring that they meet potency, purity, uniformity, stability and safety standards
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Source: WorkBC Career Profile for Pharmacists

<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/pharmacists>

## ***Industry Overview***

There is a shortage of pharmacists in British Columbia and a significant number of job openings are expected in response to new job creation and the need to replace retiring workers. Rural and smaller communities, in particular, are short of both community and hospital pharmacists.

Over the last decade years, Canada's aging population has led to a rapidly increasing number of prescriptions being filled by pharmacists. The largest increase in pharmacy activity has taken place in community pharmacies that are located in food and general merchandise stores. Many jobs will be created in retail pharmacies as more supermarkets and general merchandisers open pharmacies in their stores.

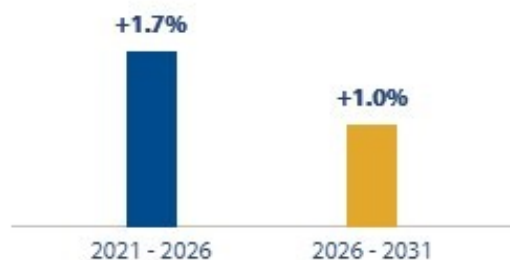
## ***Job Outlook in BC***

### **Pharmacists**

#### **B.C. Labour Market Outlook (2021-2031)**

##### Provincial outlook

##### **Forecasted average employment growth rate**



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

##### **Job openings**

10 year expected job openings: **1,450**



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

##### **Composition of job openings**

Replacement of retiring workers:  
**54.2%**  
**780 openings**



New jobs due to economic growth:  
**45.8%**  
**660 openings**

Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

Chart from WorkBC

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2021-2031:

Region	Employment in 2021	Average Annual Employment Growth 2021-2031	Expected Number of Job Openings 2021-2031
Vancouver Island	690	1.1%	210
Lower Mainland / Southwest	2930	1.4%	960
Thompson-Okanagan	440	1.7%	180
Kootenay	70	1.6%	30
Cariboo	220	0.3%	10
North Coast & Nechako	70	2.7%	20
Northeast	50	2.3%	10

You can learn more about working in BC from the following sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Pharmacists**

<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/pharmacists>

- **Career Cruising**

<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/> [profile for Pharmacist]

Available from the VPL Digital Library

### ***Types of Employers***

- Hospitals
- Universities
- Government
- Pharmaceutical companies

Retail pharmacies, which include privately-owned and operated pharmacies,

- national chains, and pharmacies located in super markets and big box stores.

### ***Salary***

In BC, the median annual salary for pharmacists is \$98,725. Pharmacists who work full-time usually receive benefits such as dental coverage, paid sick leave and vacation time. Some pharmacists can also earn bonuses or participate in profit-sharing programs.

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Depending on the work place, you may belong to a union. This means wages and benefits are negotiated by union representatives on your behalf.

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

In BC regions you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Salary (\$/year)		
	Low	Median	High
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	68,708	98,725	127,387
<a href="#">Cariboo Region</a>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Kootenay Region</a>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	61,756	94,433	120,312
<a href="#">Nechako Region</a>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">North Coast Region</a>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Northeast Region</a>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Thompson–Okanagan Region</a>	81,859	105,191	142,872
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	80,221	104,160	129,079
<a href="#">Canada</a>	54,112	104,646	144,300

Source: Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

## **Working Hours**

Most pharmacists work approximately 40 to 50 hours per week. Working in community pharmacies may require evening and weekend work. Pharmacists working in hospitals may work rotating shifts.

## 2. Skills, Education and Experience

### ***Skills***

- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Good manual dexterity
- Good mathematical and computer skills
- Strong ethical sense
- Enjoy personal interaction

### ***Education and Experience***

Pharmacists require:

- Bachelor of science degree in pharmacy
- Pass a board examination, Pharmacy Examination Board of Canada
- Practical training under the supervision of a pharmacist
- Registration with the College of Pharmacists of BC
- New pharmacists must pass an English Language Fluency exam

### ***Qualifications***

#### **Pharmacist is a regulated profession in BC**

You must be registered with the *College of Pharmacists of British Columbia* in order to work as a pharmacist in BC.

For more information on registration and licensing see:

- **College of Pharmacists of British Columbia**  
<https://www.bcpharmacists.org/>  
<https://www.bcpharmacists.org/pharmacist-registration>
- **Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada PEBC**  
<https://pebc.ca/>

## ***International Applicants***

There are a number of steps for international pharmacy graduates to follow in order to become registered to practise pharmacy in BC.

- Step 1** *Enroll with Pharmacists' Gateway Canada and apply for PEBC for the Document Evaluation and Evaluating exam*  
[www.pharmacistsgatewaycanada.ca](http://www.pharmacistsgatewaycanada.ca)  
[www.pebc.ca](http://www.pebc.ca)
- Step 2** *Pre-register as an applicant with the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia*  
[https://library.bcpharmacists.org/7\\_Forms/7-1\\_Pharmacist/9168-AppPreReg\\_Checklist.pdf](https://library.bcpharmacists.org/7_Forms/7-1_Pharmacist/9168-AppPreReg_Checklist.pdf)
- Step 3** *Successfully complete the English Language Proficiency requirements set by the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia*
- Step 4** *Successfully complete the jurisprudence examination*  
<https://www.bcpharmacists.org/jurisprudence-exam>
- Step 5** *Successfully complete the Structured Practical Training Program- part of the Canadian Pharmacy Practice Program (CP3)*  
*Structured Practical Training (SPT) program provides students with the opportunity to gain Canadian pharmacy practice experience*  
<https://cpd.pharmacy.ubc.ca/programs/international-pharmacy-graduate-ipg-cp3-program>
- Step 6** *Successfully complete the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada qualifying exam – Part I(MCQ) and Part II (OSCE)*  
<https://pebc.ca/>
- Step 7** *Complete the "Application for Full Pharmacist Registration"*

For further information on the above steps see the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia's site:

- **International Pharmacy Graduates**

<https://www.bcpharmacists.org/international-pharmacy-graduate-ipg>



The College of Pharmacists of British Columbia has partnered with the University of British Columbia to provide the **Canadian Pharmacy Practice Program** (CPPP) (CP3). The CPPP focuses on courses relevant to international graduates who already have a pharmacy degree in order to help them meet Canadian practice standards and licensing requirements. *Enrollment in the Program is mandatory.*

For more information see:

- **Canadian Pharmacy Practice Program CP3**

<https://cpd.pharmacy.ubc.ca/programs/international-pharmacy-graduate-ipg>  
<https://cpd.pharmacy.ubc.ca/programs/international-pharmacy-graduate-ipg-cp3-program/program-details>

### **3. Finding Jobs**

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

#### ***Local Newspapers***

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and in *The Province* on Sundays.

#### ***Online Job Postings***

- **BC Health Careers**

<https://www.bchealthcareers.ca/>

Hospital pharmacist recruitment service funded by the Government of British Columbia.

- **Allied Health Jobs BC**

<https://alliedhealthjobsbc.ca/>

- **Provincial Health Services Authority**

<http://www.phsa.ca/careers>

Operates nine agencies that provide province-wide health care services.

- **Indeed.ca**

<https://www.indeed.ca/>

Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards

### ***Professional Associations' Career Resources***

- **Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns - Jobs**

<https://www.pharmacy-jobs.ca/jobs/>

### ***Identifying the Right Position***

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For pharmacists, look for these related job titles (from NOC):

- Clinical Pharmacist
- Community Pharmacist
- Dispensary Department Supervisor
- Druggist
- Pharmacist Consultant
- Registered Pharmacist
- Retail Pharmacist

### ***Creating a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of pharmacies in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Who's Who: Canadian Grocer Magazine's Annual Directory of Chains & Groups in Canada**

Available at the Central Library, 380 Fo6Cw

Includes listings of pharmacies in grocery stores

- **Directory of Retail Chains in Canada**

Available at the Central Library, C380 D5983

See listings under "General Merchandise: Drugs/Health & Beauty Aids" for chain drugstores.

- **Reference Canada**

<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "pharmacies" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library

**NOTE:** You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).

## 4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume (curriculum vitae) and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

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To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following pathfinders which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

- **Networking for Employment**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

## 5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

### ***Industry Associations***

Associations for pharmacists in BC and Canada provide assistance to individuals. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **British Columbia Pharmacy Association**

<https://www.bcpharmacy.ca/>

- **College of Pharmacists of British Columbia**

<https://www.bcpharmacists.org/>

- **Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists**

<https://www.cshp.ca/>

- **BC Branch**

<https://cshp-bc.com/>

- **Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns**

<https://capsi.ca/>

An association of pharmacy students, pharmacy interns, and undergraduate pharmacy organizations across Canada.

### ***Industry Journals***

Search for journals related to your profession. An example includes:

- **Canadian Pharmacists Journal (CPJ/RPC)**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/cph>

- **The BC Branchlet**

**Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists**

<https://cshp-bc.com/the-bc-branchlet/>

**Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch,  
Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.**

*Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the  
Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.*