



# WHY A **BSN** MATTERS



Whether You Have Your RN or Not



# Table of Contents

Deciding between an RN or BSN	Pg. 3
What the nursing field says	Pg. 4
Why should I get a BSN	Pg. 4
Career goals worksheet	Pg. 5
Career paths with a BSN	Pg. 6
Opportunities outside of nursing	Pg. 7
Why a BSN helps your patients	Pg. 7
Taking Steps toward a BSN	Pg. 8

You've heard the debate:

### Is a BSN necessary if you already work as an RN?

Deciding what's right for you depends on how you envision your career in the future or if you're happy where you currently are. Consider how a BSN can help you fulfill certain goals—whether it's to earn more money, seek advancement or take on additional responsibility. If you're trying to decide whether going back to school makes sense for you, use this guide and worksheet (see page 5) to start you off.



### If You Haven't Decided Whether to Earn an RN or BSN

If you haven't enrolled in nursing school yet, you'll also need to tackle the "RN vs. BSN" debate. Consider your career plans. If you want to work sooner, an ADN can be completed in two years and makes you eligible for entry-level RN positions. While a BSN takes longer to finish, you'll have a competitive edge in the field.



### Did you know?

#### Take it from other nurses:

A BSN can help you feel more accomplished and confident. According to the National Student Nurses' Association:

- 91 percent of nurses felt personal satisfaction after earning a BSN
- 85 percent saw professional growth
- 82 percent expanded their knowledge base



## Did you know?

In 2004, about 35,000 RNs were enrolled in BSN programs. Fast forward to 2012 and approximately 100,000 RNs returned to school, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

This increase in enrollment demonstrates how competitive the field of nursing can be. For many jobs, you may not even be considered without a BSN.

## What the Nursing Field Says

The BSN conversation is common. In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a recommendation that 80 percent of nurses should hold a BSN by 2020. Some state lawmakers have discussed another initiative, “BSN in 10,” which would require nurses to earn a BSN within 10 years of initial licensure.

It’s easy to see the direction the nursing field is headed. More hospitals and health care employers are seeking out nurses with bachelor’s degrees. Additional education is recommended, or even expected, as the health care industry changes. Nurses are spending more of their time treating patients with chronic conditions. The problem? ADN curriculums have generally focused on acute illnesses and injuries. Today’s aging population and unique health care challenges have changed how nurses do their job.

If you already have your RN, have you experienced moments where you haven’t felt confident in your skill set? Depending on what types of health issues you treat, earning a BSN can help bring you up to speed with courses that cover complex health problems, nursing leadership and community health partnerships. If you don’t have your degree yet, think about how these advanced courses can help you down the road.

## Why Should I Get a BSN?

If you’ve been out of school for a while, returning to the classroom can certainly feel daunting. But, with so many nurses earning their BSN, you’ll likely find support from fellow colleagues. If money and time are a concern, talk to your manager. Many health care employers provide tuition assistance so you can earn your degree while you work. Online BSN programs, which offer flexible scheduling, are also available.

Now that you’ve eliminated some of the major obstacles, think about the specific reasons a BSN could help improve your life and career.

*See worksheet in the next page »*

## What are your goals?

Use this worksheet to answer these questions.

**1** What type of career development am I looking for?

**2** Do I want to educate other nurses?

**3** What settings do I want to work in? *Public health, geriatrics, home care?*

**4** Am I comfortable with new technology and how it affects the nursing profession?

**5** Do I want the ability to move between different health care environments (hospital, nursing home, public health)?

**6** How important is a higher salary to me?

**7** Am I looking for additional knowledge to feel satisfied?



## Have You Considered These Careers?

- Legal nursing consultant
- Traveling nurse
- School nurse
- Research nurse



## Career Paths with a BSN

A BSN can open up doors to career opportunities you wouldn't otherwise be eligible for.

As you look for room to grow and more responsibility, you'll need the additional education. If you've ever considered working in the following roles, a BSN can help get you there.

- Nurse supervisor
- Nurse educator
- Administration
- Informatics

A BSN is also a stepping stone if your goal is to eventually earn a master's degree and work as a nurse practitioner, nurse midwife or clinical nurse specialist.



## More Opportunities (Outside of Nursing)

If you ever decide to leave the nursing profession, you may find your job opportunities are limited if you don't have a bachelor's degree. Since a BSN program also includes courses in liberal arts and topics beyond nursing, you'll benefit from a well-rounded education.

Take a look at the IOM's essential competencies for this generation of nurses. A BSN program can prepare you to tackle these issues. If you decide to change careers in the future, this knowledge can still be used in other fields.

Leadership

Health policy

System improvement

Research and evidence-based practice

Community and public health and geriatric expertise



## Why a BSN Helps Your Patients

As a nurse, you want to provide the best possible care to patients. With additional education and critical-thinking skills, you can do just that. In fact, research has shown nurses with BSNs have better patient outcomes.

According to the *Journal of Nursing Administration* (February 2013), hospitals with more BSN-educated nurses saw lower congestive heart failure mortality and lower rates of post-operative deep vein thrombosis.

The communication skills you gain can also help you educate patients about their illness/injury and treatment.



## Taking Steps Toward a BSN

If you're already working as an RN, an RN-BSN program will take about two years to complete. If you have a bachelor's degree in other area of study, accelerated BSN programs are available. In this case, you'll focus primarily on nursing studies instead of the liberal arts courses. These programs are rigorous and take about 18 months to complete. Because of their fast-paced nature, accelerated BSN programs require the majority of your time. Some schools even require that you forgo working while enrolled. Students are expected to maintain very high academic standards.

Ready to start now? >>

“Registered nurses with at least a bachelor’s degree in nursing (BSN) will have better job prospects than those without one.”

– U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics