

Degree Routes

Associate's Degree in Nursing – ADN

An ADN degree provides the opportunity to work standard entry-level nursing positions. The degree can be acquired over the course of 2-3 years and upon completion, graduates are eligible to take the NCLEX-RN examination. These programs are typically found at community colleges and through hybrid online institutions, making them convenient and relatively affordable. One disadvantage of only earning an ADN are the rapidly changing standards of hospitals and state boards. Many hospitals only hire nurses that have a BSN or higher.

Bachelor of Science in Nursing – BSN

A BSN degree can be completed between 2-4+ years depending on the point of entry into the program. A BSN differs from an ADN in its emphasis on research, leadership, public health, and the social sciences in order to provide students with a heightened understanding of the factors impacting modern healthcare. BSN graduates are typically offered a greater variety of positions than RNs that only have an ADN. Additionally, many hospitals now require that prospective job applicants have their BSN. BSN programs are more expensive than ADN programs and are typically not offered through community colleges. These programs tend to be highly competitive.

2nd Baccalaureate – Accelerated BSN

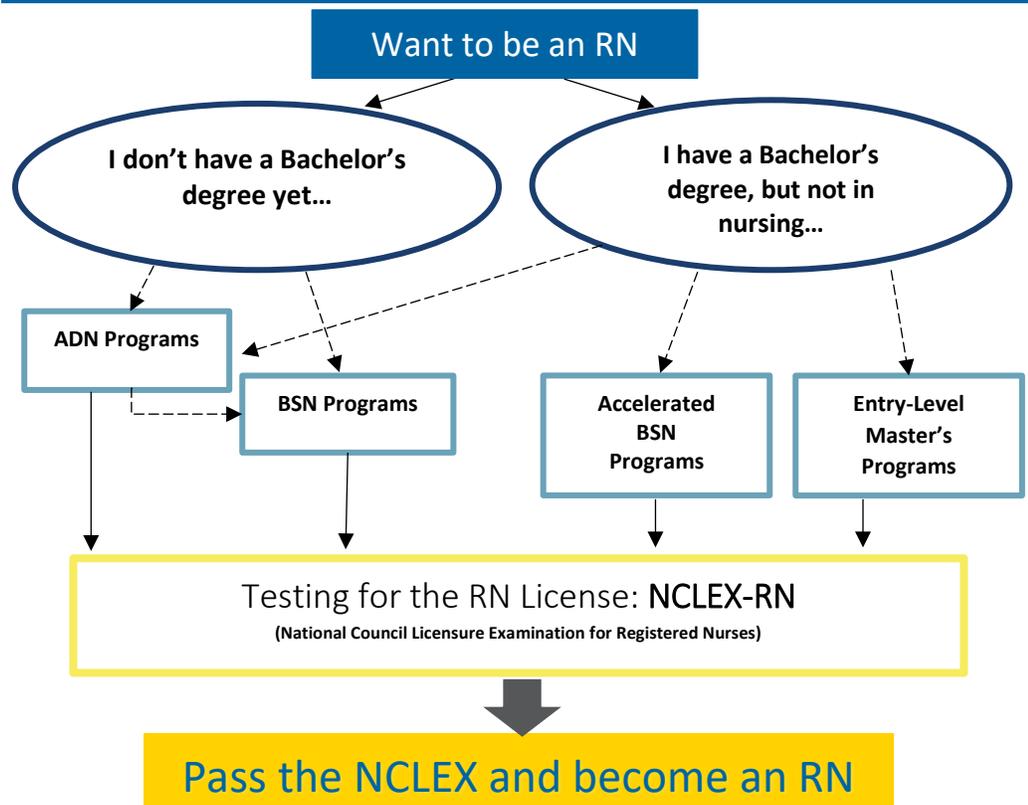
Accelerated BSN programs allow individuals that already have a bachelor's degree in a non-nursing discipline to pursue an accelerated degree in nursing. Students enrolled in these programs are typically older, have more life experience, and have higher academic expectations. Accelerated BSN program are one of the fastest routes to become an RN for those that already have a bachelor's degree.

Entry-Level Master's Programs – ELMN and MEPN

Entry-Level Master's programs are very similar to Accelerated BSN Programs, but differ in a few key ways. Firstly, graduates from ELMN/MEPN programs are awarded an MSN upon graduation, not a BSN. This MSN degree is not equivalent to the MSN required for any of the highly sought after APRN specialties. Some programs, however, do offer specialized tracks to receive MSN degrees equivalent to the APRN MSN. Secondly, these programs are typically longer and more rigorous than the standard BSN or Accelerated BSN program. Students can expect to spend approximately 2-3+ years in a direct-entry Master's program for nursing.

How Can I Become a Registered Nurse?

There is no single "right way" to pursue your future nursing career. Follow the chart below to see which path best matches your circumstances, and read about the different degrees you can pursue on the left-hand column!



Selecting the Right Program

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

You CANNOT become a licensed RN unless you receive a nursing degree from an accredited institution. These institutions can be found at <https://www.rn.ca.gov/education/rnprograms.shtml>

PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC

- Tuition and Cost of Attendance
- Pre-Nursing vs. Direct Entry
- Program Length

CALL/EMAIL AHEAD!

If you are interested in a school/program, don't hesitate to call or email questions.

Taking the NCLEX-RN

Once you have earned a Nursing degree (ADN, BSN, or entry-level MSN), you become eligible to take the [National Council Licensure Examination \(NCLEX-RN exam\)](#). This exam is used to determine whether or not you have the knowledge to begin practice as an entry-level nurse. By passing the exam, you are awarded your Nursing License in the state you take the exam.

The NCLEX-RN exam is comprised primarily of multiple choice questions with some multiple-response, fill-in-the-blank, and other options. The exam is taken electronically and ranges between 75-265 questions. You are given 6 hours to complete the exam and it is graded on a pass/fail basis with no numerical score.