

INFECTION PREVENTIONISTS:

Healthcare Specialists Dedicated to Infection Prevention and Control

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [estimates](#) that on any given day, 1 in 31 hospital patients and 1 in 43 nursing home residents has an infection while being treated in a medical facility. Healthcare-associated infections claim the lives of tens of thousands of Americans each year and have devastating effects on physical, emotional, and financial health.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL IS A GROWING FIELD

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of infection prevention and control, and in particular, the role that infection preventionists (IPs) play in preparing healthcare facilities for infectious disease threats and keeping infections from spreading both inside and outside of healthcare. The need for IPs is great and is poised to expand further to cover the growing demand for IPs in hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient clinics, home care, public health, education, and business settings.

IPs are healthcare professionals with specialized training and certification in infection control and epidemiology. They are the only specialists in healthcare dedicated to preventing infections. IPs collaborate throughout the facility ensuring compliance with public health and regulatory standards, pandemic management, staff education, construction management, water quality, environmental disinfection, ventilation and airflow systems, antibiotic stewardship, instrument sterilization, and more.

In their roles, IPs often:

- Look for patterns and spot clusters of infections in healthcare facilities; in particular, they are focused on infections caused by antibiotic-resistant organisms and/or those associated with invasive procedures and indwelling devices.
- Track infection data and activities to prevent healthcare-associated infections.
- Integrate evidence-based infection prevention practices into facility-wide policies, guidelines, protocols, and educational strategies.
- Work with clinical teams to limit unnecessary antimicrobial use to prevent the spread of antimicrobial resistance.
- Educate healthcare personnel and the public about infectious diseases and how to limit their spread.
- Observe and coach healthcare personnel on proper hand hygiene, use of personnel protective equipment, cleaning of hospital rooms and medical instruments, and other practices proven to reduce the spread of infectious organisms.
- Communicate and consult with public health agencies.
- Report communicable diseases to the CDC and other public health agencies.
- Serve as leaders and subject-matter experts in preparing healthcare facilities, personnel, and the public for health threats such as COVID-19.
- Collaborate with regulatory partners to ensure compliance with accreditation agencies

IPs work in a range of care settings:

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| • Hospitals and health systems | • Rehabilitation centers |
| • Nursing homes and other long-term care settings | • Behavioral health units |
| • Outpatient clinics and surgery centers | • Jails and prisons |
| | • Public health agencies |

IPs also consult with schools, business, and other entities on how to keep the public safe and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Infection prevention and control is a multidisciplinary field. IPs come from diverse backgrounds:

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| • Nursing | • Medical technology |
| • Public health | • Information technology |
| • Microbiology | • Allied health professions, e.g., respiratory therapy, medical imaging, radiography |
| • Laboratory studies | |

JOB TITLES AND SALARY RANGES

Job titles and salary ranges for professionals in the field vary by geography within the U.S., institution, level of experience, and role. The following are estimates and may not be indicative of roles and salaries in all areas of the U.S.

Assistive Role:

Salary Range: \$50-60 K/year

- Surveillance Data Assistant
- Infection Control Analyst

Routine role:

Salary Range: \$65-125 K/year

- Infection Preventionist
- Infection Control Practitioner
- Infection Control Coordinator
- Clinical Infection Preventionist
- Epidemiologist

Administrative Role:

Salary Range: \$70-200 K/year

- Lead Infection Preventionist
- Infection Prevention Project Manager
- Infection Control Supervisor/ Manager/Director/Senior Director/Vice President

Medical Degree:

Salary Range: \$>110 K/year

- Hospital Epidemiologist

LEARN MORE AND JOIN THIS EXCITING AND GROWING FIELD

If you are interested in making an impact on the safety of patients, healthcare workers, and the public, then this may be the career for you!

Here's how to get started:

Academic Courses to consider taking:

- Healthcare/Hospital Epidemiology
- Infectious Disease Clusters/Outbreaks
- Surveillance
- Quantitative Data Collection, Analysis
- Survey Development
- Monitoring & Evaluation, Program Evaluation
- Implementation Science
- Behavioral Science Health Education: How to Develop Interventions (for specific populations)

Relevant work experience:

- **Example A:** Internship, capstone, practicum in a hospital, long-term acute care facility, skilled nursing facility, health department, nonprofit working within the realm of infection prevention
- **Example B:** Research Assistant, Graduate Assistant, Teaching Assistant for a healthcare-associated infections course; working with a professor who researches healthcare-associated infections, infectious diseases
- **Example C:** Capstone, practicum, and/or thesis related to healthcare-associated infections, infection control, infectious diseases
- **Example D:** Volunteer at a hospital, long-term care facility, skilled nursing facility, health department, or within a public health agency or institution
- **Example E:** Fellowship (CSTE/ CDC, ORISE, APHA, etc.) which allows you exposure to (a) hospital, long-term acute care facility, skilled nursing facility, health department, nonprofit working within the realm of infection prevention

How to get started (continued):

a-IPC Certification

The a-IPC (Associate – Infection Prevention and Control) entry-level certification is a measure of basic infection prevention competency. It is intended for the novice IP and for those interested in pursuing careers in infection prevention and control.

Learn more: cbic.org/CBIC/Get-Certified/Get-Started/a-IPC

APIC Resources

APIC offers education and training for those new to the field and beyond. Here are some resources to get you started.

Visit the APIC website: apic.org/what-is-an-infection-preventionist

- » [APIC Chapter information](#) – Use APIC’s Chapter Map to find a chapter near you. Attend a chapter meeting and get to know the IPs in your area. Many chapters allow students to attend a program for free or for a reduced cost to learn more about the career and make networking connections.
- » [APIC Membership](#) – Once you are surer about your career direction, consider joining APIC where you will find a community of IPs spanning all career stages and gain access to professional development resources. Reduced fees for a *student membership*.
- » [APIC Career Center](#) – View and apply for jobs in the field.

About APIC

Founded in 1972, the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) is the leading association for infection preventionists and epidemiologists. With more than 15,000 members, APIC advances the science and practice of infection prevention and control. APIC carries out its mission through research, advocacy, and patient safety; education, credentialing, and certification; and fostering development of the infection prevention and control workforce of the future. Together with our members and partners, we are working toward a safer world through the prevention of infection. Join us and learn more at apic.org.

APIC Vision:

A Safer World Through the Prevention of Infection

APIC Mission:

To Advance the Science and Practice of Infection Prevention and Control