

# What Is an Advanced Practice Provider?

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Nurse practitioners and physician assistants are considered **advanced practice providers, or mid-levels**. Both are commonly employed in subspecialty areas, such as pediatric neurology.

## **What is a nurse practitioner (NP)?**

A nurse practitioner, also known as an NP, is an advanced practice registered nurse who has completed training beyond that of a registered nurse (RN). Nurse practitioners have experience as a registered nurse, as well as a master's or doctorate degree in nursing, a national board certification in their specialty, and a state licensure. They can practice independently or as part of a team of health care professionals.

## **What is a physician assistant (PA)?**

A physician assistant, also known as a PA, is a medical professional who is a graduate of an accredited PA educational program and is nationally certified and state licensed to practice medicine with the supervision of a physician. PAs collaborate with physicians as part of the healthcare team.

## **Specialized training**

Nurse practitioners can specialize in family practice, pediatrics, geriatrics, and many other specialty fields. For example, a nurse practitioner who specializes in pediatrics has advanced education and training to appropriately care for infants, toddlers, school-age children, and adolescents. Additionally, many mid-levels receive extensive training in a subspecialty from their supervising physicians and employers.

## **What can a mid-level/advanced practice provider do?**

Nurse practitioners and physician assistants are able to take a complete health history, perform a physical and neurological exam, diagnose disease or illness, and plan and execute appropriate treatment for their patients. They are able to perform some tests and procedures, answer health and wellness questions, and provide patient education to families about illnesses and disease prevention. NPs and PAs can order and interpret medical tests, write prescriptions, and provide referrals. Mid-levels work very independently, often seeing patients in the clinic and in the hospital without direct physician oversight. However, both NPs and PAs have a close working relationship with physicians and consult with them when needed, such as with patients who have difficult cases or are chronically ill.

While nurse practitioners and physician assistants do not have the same additional training of a medical doctor, they share similar roles in the health and management of patients. They always have access to a supervising physician while providing excellent care for patients and their families.

## **References and Resources:**

<https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/nurse-practitioner.html>

<https://www.aapa.org/what-is-a-pa/>

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