

**American Association for Respiratory Care**  
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## **Position Statement**

# **Definition of Respiratory Care**

Respiratory Care is the health care discipline that specializes in the promotion of optimum cardiopulmonary function and health and wellness. Respiratory Therapists employ scientific principles to identify, treat and prevent acute or chronic dysfunction of the cardiopulmonary system.

Knowledge and understanding of the scientific principles underlying cardiopulmonary physiology and pathophysiology, as well as biomedical engineering and application of technology, enables respiratory therapists to provide patient care services efficiently. As a health care profession, Respiratory Care is practiced under medical direction across the health care continuum. Critical thinking, patient/environment assessment skills, and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines enable respiratory therapists to develop and implement effective care plans, patient-driven protocols, disease-based clinical pathways, and disease management programs.

A variety of settings serves as the practice sites for this health care profession including, but not limited to:

- Acute care hospitals
- Sleep disorder centers and diagnostic laboratories
- Long term acute care facilities
- Rehabilitation, research and skilled nursing facilities
- Patients' homes
- Patient transport systems
- Physician offices and clinics
- Convalescent and retirement centers
- Educational institutions
- Medical equipment companies and suppliers
- Wellness centers

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