

Cardiovascular Sonography

- **What Is a Cardiovascular Sonographer?**
 - A cardiovascular sonographer is a cardiovascular technologist who specializes in heart imaging. These professionals administer ultrasounds that create images of the heart and surrounding circulatory organs, such as blood vessels. The images, known as echocardiograms, can be used to help physicians diagnose conditions affecting the heart and blood flow. Tests can be conducted on patients who are exercising or at rest, and they may even be conducted on fetuses during pregnancy. After carrying out a test, the cardiac sonographer may analyze and summarize the result for the physician, and they may discuss the quality of the results with the healthcare team in order to decide whether further testing is necessary.

- **What Does a Cardiovascular Sonographer Do?**
 - Cardiovascular sonographers use ultrasound technology to examine patients' hearts and circulatory systems, assisting in the diagnosis of cardiovascular conditions. They also help physicians with other procedures and may administer medication used to assess patient's heart function. You could work as a cardiovascular sonographer in a hospital or clinic, or in a physician's office or imaging center.

- **What Education and Training Will I Need?**
 - You will need to earn a minimum of an Associate in Applied Sciences (AAS) degree in an area such as cardiovascular sonography, cardiovascular technology or diagnostic medical sonography. Four-year bachelor's degree programs are also increasing in number. You will study the technology used in the field, anatomy and physiology, and diagnostic procedures. You may have more opportunities for advancement as a clinician, administrator or educator if you complete a bachelor's degree program. You should choose a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Professionals (CAAHEP).
 - You will also need continuing education throughout your career, as advances in the technology related to cardiovascular science are frequent. Additional training in advanced life support and resuscitation techniques is important, as you will sometimes work with patients at high risk of cardiac arrest.

- **What Type of Certification is Available?**
 - To become certified as a Registered Diagnostic Cardiac Sonographer, you will need to pass the Sonography Principles & Instrumentation Exam administered by the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS), and the specialty examinations in one or more of the following: adult echocardiography, fetal echocardiography and pediatric echocardiography. The ARDMS exam in vascular technology leads to certification as a Registered Vascular Technologist. Cardiovascular Credentialing International (CCI) certifies Registered Cardiac Sonographers. Both the ARDMS and CCI are recognized by the American Society of Echocardiography (ASE), the professional organization for heart and circulation ultrasound specialists.

- **What's My Job Outlook?**
 - For the decade from 2014-2024, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects a 22% increase in jobs in this field, much higher than the average (www.bls.gov). As medical diagnostic procedures become increasingly non-invasive, there is an increasing need for technologists and sonographers.
 - You may also increase your opportunities for advancement by becoming certified in additional areas, and by being willing to work nonstandard hours or to relocate. Advancement to a supervisory position and working as an instructor in the field are also options.

- **What Can I Earn?**
 - The BLS reports that cardiovascular technologists and technicians in general earned an average salary of about \$56,100 in May 2015. Those working in physician offices averaged slightly more (\$59,750) than those working in hospitals (\$55,350), with about 5 times as many workers employed by hospitals.

- **What Are Some Related Alternative Careers?**
 - Cardiovascular technologists may choose a different focus area instead of sonography. For instance, they may choose to work as cardiovascular invasive specialists or cardiac catheterization technologists. Another closely related career possibility is a job as a radiologic technologist. These professionals use x-ray and other radiation-based scanning equipment to diagnose a wide range of injuries and illnesses. They need at least an associate's degree in order to get a job.