

## Introduction

### What do nurses and midwives do?

People put their trust in nurses and midwives to provide safe and supportive healthcare to the people of Australia. To ensure that this trust is met, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) regulates the practice of nursing and midwifery in Australia.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the varying roles and core activities of midwives, registered nurses, enrolled nurses and nurse practitioners.

Under the National Law, nursing and midwifery are recognised as two separate professions. There are also two divisions of nursing: registered nurses and enrolled nurses. Registered nurses can also do further study to become a nurse practitioner. Each of these titles is protected under the National Law with each category having different education, knowledge, skills and standards for practice and different responsibilities and activities.

### Who is this fact sheet for?

We have developed this fact sheet for members of the public. We aim to show what you can expect when receiving care from a nurse or midwife.

The following table outlines core activities, educational requirements and fundamental differences between each NMBA health practitioner category.

While the table provides examples of some core activities that nurses and midwives carry out in their practice, this fact sheet should only be used as a starting point. Throughout their careers, nurses and midwives continue to develop their knowledge and skills that can widen their scope of practice and capabilities.

You can find more details about the capabilities of nurses and midwives in the *Fact sheet: Scope of practice and capabilities* on the NMBA's website at [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au).

## Nursing and midwifery education pathways and core activities

|  | Enrolled Nurse (EN)   | Registered Nurse (RN)   | Nurse practitioner (NP)  | Midwife   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>What do nurses and midwives do?</b> | <p>ENs provide nursing care as part of a team. ENs always work under the supervision of an RN or NP.</p> <p><b>Examples of core EN activities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing personal care such as showering, dressing, and assisting with meals</li> <li>• recording and interpreting clinical observations including temperature, pulse and blood pressure, urine tests, blood glucose and other tests used in specific areas of practice</li> <li>• providing basic wound care in line with an agreed plan of care</li> <li>• administering and monitoring medicines and intravenous therapy</li> </ul> | <p>RNs plan and oversee the management of people in their care. RNs provide supervision of and determine what care can be provided by ENs, student nurses and other healthcare workers.</p> <p><b>Examples of core RN activities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• planning and managing care</li> <li>• performing treatments and complex care</li> <li>• starting, administering and monitoring medication and IV therapy</li> <li>• interpreting test results and reports</li> <li>• providing emotional and psychological support including advocating for a person throughout their treatment</li> <li>• supervising nursing students</li> <li>• participating in medical or surgical procedures as part of a team (for example in surgical wards and operating theatres)</li> </ul> | <p>NPs work at an advanced level and can practise independently and with other health professionals.</p> <p><b>Examples of core NP activities include many registered nursing activities, and in addition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advanced health assessment that includes ordering and interpreting tests (i.e. blood tests and x-rays)</li> <li>• diagnosing and treating new and/or longstanding physical and mental health conditions</li> <li>• independent prescribing of medicines</li> <li>• making referrals to general practitioners, medical specialists and allied health practitioners</li> </ul> | <p>Midwives work with women during and after their pregnancy to plan their care. They provide supervision of and determine what care can be provided by student midwives and other healthcare workers.</p> <p><b>Examples of core midwife activities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring and supporting women before, during and after labour</li> <li>• delivering the baby, identifying differences to a normal birth and referring as necessary to specialist staff</li> <li>• advising on and supporting parents with the daily care of their newborn babies</li> <li>• offering breastfeeding and nutritional support</li> </ul> <p><b>Endorsed midwives</b><br/>Midwives who are endorsed by the NMBA to prescribe medicines and order tests (i.e. blood tests).</p> |
| <b>Qualification</b>                   | <p><b>Diploma of Nursing</b> – Minimum 18 months</p> <p>Qualification is gained in the vocational education sector such as TAFEs and private training organisations.</p>  | <p><b>Bachelor of Nursing</b> (degree) three years or <b>Master of Nursing</b> – two years</p> <p>Qualification is gained at a university</p>   | <p>Must be registered as an RN</p> <p><b>Master of Nurse Practitioner</b> - Minimum 18 months</p> <p>Qualification is gained at a university</p>   | <p><b>Bachelor of Midwifery</b> – three years or <b>Master of Midwifery</b> – two years or <b>Graduate Diploma of Midwifery</b> – 12 months and must be an RN.</p> <p>Qualification is gained at a university</p>   |