
The New Nurse Checklist

Your First 90 Days at the Bedside

The first ninety days set the tone for your whole career. This checklist keeps you grounded — what to nail down, who to lean on, and what to watch for — so you build confidence instead of just surviving the shift.

1 First 90 Days Essentials

- ☐ Complete unit-specific orientation and shadow shifts
- ☐ Locate and bookmark your facility's policy & procedure manual
- ☐ Confirm your charting system login and complete EMR training
- ☐ Learn your unit's code/emergency response process by heart
- ☐ Introduce yourself to charge nurses, pharmacy, and rapid response team
- ☐ Set up your badge, scrubs, and required equipment (stethoscope, shears, etc.)
- ☐ Know your facility's chain of command for escalating concerns

2 Skills & Competencies to Nail Down

- ☐ Medication administration & the 5 (or 6) rights, every time
- ☐ IV insertion, line management, and infusion pump troubleshooting
- ☐ Accurate, timely, defensible documentation
- ☐ Head-to-toe assessment completed within your facility's time standard
- ☐ Safe patient handling and fall-prevention protocols
- ☐ Clear SBAR handoff communication
- ☐ Prioritization when multiple patients need you at once

3 Support System Check

- ☐ Identify a preceptor or mentor you can text with real questions
- ☐ Find at least one peer on your unit to debrief hard shifts with
- ☐ Know your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefit and how to access it
- ☐ Locate your manager's open-door hours or check-in schedule
- ☐ Join a nursing community or association (in person or online)

- ☐ Tell one person outside of work what your schedule really looks like

4 Early Burnout Red Flags — Watch for These

- ☐ Dreading your shift starts before you even leave home
- ☐ Skipping meals, water, or bathroom breaks as a daily pattern, not a rare one
- ☐ Crying in the car, supply closet, or bathroom more than once a week
- ☐ Feeling numb toward patients you'd normally connect with
- ☐ Trouble sleeping on days off because your mind won't leave the unit
- ☐ Snapping at coworkers, friends, or family more than usual

If you check three or more red flags, that's not a personal failing — it's early burnout, and it's treatable. Talk to your manager about workload, use your EAP benefit, and don't wait until it's a crisis to ask for support.