

Qualifications and courses

Spa therapists must have qualifications in the treatments or therapies they wish to offer before practising and will often be trained in a combination of therapies.

One route into this career is to take an Apprenticeship in Spa Therapy. This is an advanced apprenticeship so candidates are required to have already completed a Level 2 qualification in another subject, such as beauty therapy or nail services, before applying.

You could choose to study for a City & Guilds NVQ Diploma in Beauty Therapy (Levels 1–3) or the Level 3 in Spa Therapy. The Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) offers a Level 3 Award in Spa Treatments and a Level 3 Diploma in Spa and Body Treatments.

The industry's main governing bodies also offer qualifications in association with approved colleges. The International Therapy Examination Council (ITEC) offers a Level 3 Diploma in Spa Treatments and Spa and Body Treatments, whilst the Comité International d'Esthétique et de Cosmétologie (CIDESCO) offers the Spa Therapy Diploma. It is a standalone course and no prior beauty or spa therapy knowledge is required for entry.

Courses are also available in related, specialist subjects such as aromatherapy and electrical epilation.

If you wish to progress into management then a Foundation degree/degree in beauty and spa management will give you an advantage. ITEC also offers a Level 4 Diploma in Spa and Salon Management. Entry is usually with a relevant Level 3 qualification, such as an NVQ/SVQ Level 3 in Spa Therapy, plus at least 3 GCSEs/National 5s (A*–C/A–C), including a science subject.

What the work involves

Spa therapists provide various treatments which are designed to enhance appearance, reduce stress or improve wellbeing.

The treatments you offer could include facials, manicures and pedicures, massage, body treatments such as wraps, and exfoliation and specialist treatments like light therapy and lymphatic drainage.

You will be required to talk to your clients in order to discover their specific health needs and personal expectations. You will ensure that they are comfortable at all times and provide them with any necessary aftercare advice.

You will also be expected to keep the salon clean and tidy.

Type of person suited to this work

You will need a caring manner and the ability to make people feel at ease. You should be discreet and understand the role of confidentiality within the industry.

It is important that you are able to work effectively as part of a team. You should have excellent dexterity, outstanding attention to detail and good time management skills.

You will need to have strong personal hygiene and a smart appearance. A sound understanding of health and safety requirements would also prove beneficial.

Working conditions

Most of the work will be based in private treatment rooms which will be warm and clean but you may be required to complete some treatments in wet rooms.

A great deal of time will be spent standing and bending. Some products may irritate your skin, particularly if you are prone to such reactions. Most spa therapists wear a uniform.

Full-time hours are usually between 37 and 40 hours a week and often include evening and weekend work.

Future prospects

You will have the possibility of working in various beauty-related professions such as beauty therapist and nail technician.

You may choose to progress to a supervisory or management post which introduces more administrative and managerial work to your role. There is also the option of becoming a trainer or lecturer. There are numerous opportunities for overseas work, for example on a cruise ship or in a hotel.

Advantages/disadvantages

The unusual working hours may prove inconvenient.

Opportunities within this industry are varied so you will have many options regarding which environment you wish to work in.

Being on your feet all day could be tiring.

You may receive bonuses, discounted/free products and the use of spa facilities.

Money guide

Salaries vary depending on location, employer and number of hours worked.

Starting salaries for spa therapists are usually £12,000–£14,000. With several years' experience, earnings can increase up to £19,000.

A spa manager may earn £20,000–£40,000 a year.

Related opportunities

- Beauty Consultant p438
- Beauty Therapist p439
- Nail Technician p450

Further information

Guild of Professional Beauty Therapists
www.beautyguild.com