



Dental Hygienist

Work Activities/ Work Locations:

- Dental Hygienists work with dentists as they examine and treat patients. They also provide educational, clinical, and therapeutic services. They are responsible for providing treatment to prevent oral diseases. These tasks include applying fluoride, cleaning teeth, performing x-rays, and examining gums for disease. They can also administer local anesthetics.
- Dental Hygienists educate patients regarding oral hygiene and preventive oral care, remove soft and hard deposits from teeth, and provide other preventive dental care.
- Dental Hygienist examine patients' oral cavity – including the head, neck, lips, cheeks, tongue, teeth and gums – recording the presences of diseases or abnormalities. After assessing a patient's conditions, they develop a dental hygiene diagnosis.
- They can also remove sutures; perform root-planning as a periodontal therapy; and smooth and polish restorations.
- Hygienist may not diagnose diseases, but they can prepare clinical and laboratory diagnostic tests for the dentist to interpret. Hygienist may also work chair-side with the dentist during treatment.
- Most Dental Hygienist work with dentists in general or specialized dental offices, either for individual dentists or for groups of dentists. They are also employed at public health departments, hospitals, nursing homes, private business, correctional facilities or the military. They may also teach oral hygiene for educational programs, community groups, or at schools.

Advantages & Disadvantages:

- Dental hygienists enjoy teaching people how to take care of their teeth.
- They sometimes do not like to do the same things day after day.
- Some private dental offices do not provide job security.

Method of Entry:

- Dental hygienists must be licensed in the state where they wish to work. To do this, they must complete a training program and then pass written and practical exams.
- The American Dental Association Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations administers the written examination accepted by all States and the District of Columbia. State or regional testing agencies administer the clinical examination.
- In addition most states require an examination on legal aspects of dental hygiene practice.
- Students may choose among accredited associate (2 years) and bachelor's degree (4 year) dental hygiene programs. About half of the

- dental hygiene programs prefer applicants who have completed at least 1 year of college. However, requirements vary from one school to another.
- At NTC must attend a Pathways to Health Career Workshop. This workshop is offered online or in a classroom format. www.ntc.edu
 -

Helpful High School Experiences:

- Students should take a college preparatory curriculum.
- Helpful high school courses would include algebra, chemistry, geometry, and medical terminology.
- NTC had chemistry as a prerequisite, algebra is highly recommended before chemistry, and also biology is highly recommended.
- Participation in a Tech Prep program may be a valuable high school experience. In Tech Prep programs, high school students enroll in technical college courses.
- Students participating in these programs may enroll in a technical college with advanced standings when they graduate from high school.

Education & Training:

- College students may complete an associate (2-3 years) degree, or bachelor's degree (4 years) in an accredited program. NTC offers a 5 semester (72 credits) associate degree.
- Program coursework includes studying the sciences, anatomy & physiology, pharmacology, biochemistry, microbiology, psychology, histology (study of tissue and cells), nutrition, dental materials, sociology, public health, and pathology. Schools offer laboratory, clinical and classroom instruction
- Most dental hygiene programs grant an associate degree, although some offer a certificate, a bachelor's degree, or master's degree. A minimum of an associate degree or certificate in dental hygiene is generally required for practice in a private dental office. Whereas a bachelor's or master's degree is usually required for research, teaching, or clinical practice in public or school health programs.

Advancement Opportunities:

- Potential careers include dental assistant, dental sales representative, dental treatment coordinator, or dental hygienist.
- Hygienists who work in dentist offices usually receive pay increases as they gain additional experience.
- Graduates with a bachelor's degree may become teachers or researchers.
- Generally, a master's degree is needed to move into administrative positions in dental schools or public health agencies.

Salary:

- Typical Salary Range (2004) (Wisconsin): \$44,081 to \$59,378 per year.
- Typical Salary Range (2004) (National): \$38,656 to \$72,414 per year.

Hours:

- Dental Hygienist work 35 to 40 hours a week.
- Flexible scheduling is a distinctive feature of this job. Full-time, part-time, evenings, and weekend schedules are widely available.
- Dentists frequently hire hygienists to work only 2 to 3 days a week, so hygienists may hold jobs in more than one dental office or work part-time.

Employment Information (Wisconsin):

- Number Employed in 2000: 3,000
- Expected Employment in 2010: 3,980
- Percent Employment Growth (2000-2010): 33%
- Expected Annual Openings: 140

Educational Institutions:

- Blackhawk Technical College
- Chippewa Valley Technical College
- Fox Valley Technical College
- Gateway Technical College
- Lakeshore Technical College
- Madison Area Technical College
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- Northcentral Technical College
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
- Waukesha County Technical College
- Western Technical College

Professional Organizations & Additional Information:

- See Wisconsin Health Careers Website: www.wihealthcareers.org