



www.careersinghana.com

Email : info@careersinghana.com

Tel: +233 245649846

Dental Hygienist Career, Training, and Employment Information

Dental Hygienist Career and Job Highlights

- Hygienists may earn a certificate, or an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree.
- Employment opportunities will be readily available.
- Flexible scheduling and part time opportunities are typically available.

Dental Hygienist Career Information and Job Description

Educating patients about proper oral hygiene, cleaning teeth, and administering preventive dental care are the major responsibilities of dental hygienists. They record abnormalities and problem areas in patients' mouths. Other tasks include taking oral x rays; giving fluoride and fissure sealants; providing periodontal therapy in the form of root planning; removing plaque, calculus, and stains from teeth. Some States allow hygienists to conduct some procedures normally reserved to dentists, including filling cavities, anesthetizing patients, taking out stitches, and applying metal restorations. Hygienists often work side by side with dentists. They prepare laboratory tests for the doctor's review, though they themselves are not allowed to diagnose problems.

Dental hygienists are educators—they teach patients the ins and outs of proper dental care, how to brush and floss, and which type of floss and toothbrush are best for them.

Hygienists use a variety of apparatus to perform their jobs: they take oral x rays using x ray equipment; they clean teeth using ultrasonic, rotary, and manual tools; and they use models of teeth and the mouth to educate patients.

Unique to dental hygienists is the opportunity for flexible scheduling. Hygienists may work part time in a few offices because dentists may only hire them for a few days a week. Ample opportunities are available for part time, full time, and weekend or on call.

Dental hygienists work in sterile, well-lit environments and are exposed to relatively few hazards when following proper safety protocol. Protecting oneself from excesses of radiation from x ray machines and wearing masks and gloves to guard against infectious disease are important safety

concerns to follow.

Dental Hygienist Career Training and Job Qualifications

Passing a practical and written test and graduation from an accredited dental hygiene school are requirements to gain licensure in the State in which they are practicing. All States and the District of Columbia accept the examination given by the American Dental Association Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations. The clinical test is administered by regional or State testing centers. The majority of States also require hygienists to pass a test on the legal aspects of their field. Alabama offers a State-regulated hands-on training program for hygienists; those who complete this program are allowed to take the exams.

There were some 265 dental hygiene programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation in 2002. An associate degree is offered by the majority of programs, though some award bachelor's and master's degrees or certificates. To practice in a private dental office requires at least an associate degree or certificate. A four-year or advanced degree is typically necessary to teach, research, or work in public health programs.

One year of college experience was preferred by approximately half of hygiene programs. Subjects studied during hygiene school include physiology, microbiology, radiography, gum diseases (periodontology), dental material, pathology, pharmacology, nutrition, clinical dental hygiene, and tissue structure (histology).

Pre-dental hygiene students should pursue courses of study in life sciences and math. Interpersonal skills and good manual dexterity are essential skills for hygienists.

Dental Hygienist Job and Employment Opportunities

Demand for hygienists is expected to increase at significantly faster than average as more people seek dental care and hygienists take over roles previously filled by dentists. Through 2012 dental hygiene is projected to be one of the fastest growing employment fields.

Demand will also be spurred as the population grows and more people keep their natural teeth. Newer dentists are more likely to employ hygienists than are older dentists who will be retiring soon. Increased work loads for dentists will translate into more opportunities for hygienists as dentists will need more help to keep up with the growth.

Historical Earnings Information

The highest and lowest ten percent of hygienists earned about \$40 and \$17 per hour, respectively. The middle quartiles earned between \$21.96 and \$32.48 an hour. The median earnings in 2002 were \$26.59 per hour.

Payment options for hygienists may include salary, hourly, daily, or on commission. Pay rate is affected by location, experience, and type of employment.

Hygienists employed by governmental agencies typically receive excellent benefits. Those employed with private offices may or may not receive benefits, usually depending on full time status. Nine out of ten full time hygienists had dental coverage, while nearly all had paid time off.