

Dental Hygienist

Dental Hygienists examine patients for signs of oral diseases, such as gingivitis, and provide preventive care, including oral hygiene. They also educate patients about oral health.

Dental Hygienists typically do the following:

- Remove tartar, stains, and plaque from teeth
- Apply sealants and fluorides to help protect teeth
- Take and develop dental x-rays
- Assess patients' oral health and report findings to dentists
- Document patient care and treatment plans
- Educate patients about oral hygiene techniques, such as how to brush and floss correctly

Dental Hygienists use many types of tools—including hand, power, and ultrasonic tools—in their work. In some cases, they use lasers. Hygienists remove stains with an air-polishing device, which sprays a combination of air, water, and baking soda. They polish teeth with a power tool that works like an automatic toothbrush. Hygienists also use x-ray machines to take pictures to check for tooth or jaw problems.

Dental Hygienists talk to patients about ways to keep their teeth and gums healthy. For example, they may explain the relationship between diet and oral health. They may also advise patients on how to select toothbrushes and other oral care devices.

Work Environment

Nearly all Dental Hygienists work in Dentists' offices, and many work part time. Dentists may hire Hygienists to work only a few days a week, so some Hygienists work for more than one Dentist.

Watch a video about being a Dental Hygienist

Top Local Employers:

Western Dental Services, Pacific Dental Services, Gentle Dental, Aspen Dental Management, Styn, LLC

Median Pay

\$119,976

Job Growth (2020-2025)

-1%



Education and Training

Dental Hygienists typically need an associate degree in dental hygiene; they may also get a bachelor's degree. Master's degree programs in dental hygiene are available but are relatively uncommon. Dental hygiene programs are often found in community colleges, technical schools, and universities.

Programs typically take 3 years to complete and offer laboratory, clinical, and classroom instruction. Areas of study include anatomy, medical ethics, and periodontics, which is the study of gum disease.

Local Education:

[Foothill College](#)

[Chabot College](#)

[Carrington College](#)

For More Information:

[American Dental Hygienists Organization](#)

[Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)