

CAREER PROFILE

JOB DESCRIPTION

Dental hygienists examine patients for signs of oral diseases 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, develop, and interpret 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
- Conduct head and neck exams
- Record medical and dental health histories
- Monitor blood pressure and vital signs
- Assess pain management
- Check changes or abnormalities in the mouth
- Prepare dental charts
- Apply fluorides and sealants to protect teeth from cavities
- Counsel patients on proper nutrition for maintaining health gums and teeth
- Administer local anesthetic and / or nitrous oxide analgesia
- Administer smoking cessation programs
- Administer cavity prevention programs
- Counsel patients on the importance of good nutrition for maintaining optimal oral health

PAY

Median annual wage was \$87,530 (\$42.00 per hour) in May 2023

JOB OUTLOOK

7% (Faster than average)

EDUCATION/TRAINING

An Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene is required. The program is about 24 months depending on the school. Most students complete all of the general education courses prior to beginning the dental hygiene curriculum. **Many local programs have a wait list and prerequisites are taken beforehand.** Some students move on to a bachelor's degree or master's after earning the associate degree.

LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

License requirements for dental hygienists vary by state. In most states, a degree from an accredited dental hygiene program and passing written and clinical examinations are required for licensure. To maintain licensure, hygienists must complete continuing education requirements. To practice as a dental hygienist in Ohio, you must successfully complete the following:

- National Board Dental Hygiene Exam (NBDHE) (*a one-day written exam*)
- Commission on Dental Competency Assessments (CDCA)
- Ohio State Dental Board Ethics/Law Exam

IMPORTANT SKILLS

- **Critical thinking.** Dental hygienists must be able to assess and evaluate patients and to develop oral hygiene care plans.
- **Communication skills.** Dental hygienists must share information with dentists and patients about oral health status, oral hygiene care plans, and, if necessary, lifestyle counseling.
- **Detail-oriented.** Dental hygienists must follow specific rules and protocols to help dentists diagnose and treat a patient.
- **Dexterity.** Dental hygienists must be good at working with their hands. They generally work in tight spaces on a small part of the body, which requires fine motor skills using precise tools and instruments.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Dental hygienists work closely with dentists. They also must be considerate in working with patients, especially those with sensitivity to pain or with fears about undergoing dental treatment.
- **Problem-solving skills.** Dental hygienists develop and implement oral hygiene care plans to maintain or improve patients' oral health.
- **Ability to succeed in a science-based curriculum**
- **Time-management skills**

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Private practices
- Healthcare agencies
- Hospitals
- Sales
- Government research programs
- Dental hygiene education programs

ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Metropolitan Campus, Cleveland

Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene. Program is available as a two-year Associate of Applied Science Degree plus front end program prerequisites. This full-time, daytime-only program begins each fall semester. Students train in an on-campus Dental Hygiene Clinic.

www.tri-c.edu/programs/health-careers/dental-hygiene/index.html

LAKELAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kirtland

Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene. A two-year (minimum), 75-credit hour program.

www.lakelandcc.edu/web/about/dental-hygiene-departments

LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Elyria

Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene. A two-year, 75-credit hour program.

www.lorainccc.edu/health/dental-hygiene-program/dental-hygiene/

STARK STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Canton

Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene. They offer full time and part time options in this 73-credit hour program.

www.starkstate.edu/academics/programs/dental-hygiene/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DENTAL HYGIENE SCHOOLS IN OHIO

odha.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Ohio-Schools-1.pdf

Extended training option for certified dental hygienists:

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY EXPANDED FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARY

Cleveland

This program trains registered dental hygienists (RDH) with a strong desire to further their dental expertise in the art of restorative dentistry. Ohio EFDAs specialize in the placement of advanced remedial intraoral procedures—including the placement of preventative or restorative materials limited to sealants and metallic/non-metallic restorative materials (fillings).

case.edu/dental/prospective-students/expanded-function-dental-auxiliary-efda

Bachelor of Science degrees in Dental Hygiene

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

<https://dentistry.osu.edu/academics/programs/dental-hygiene-programs>

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

<https://explore.ysu.edu/bitonte-college-of-health-human-services/bs-in-dental-hygiene/>