

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 healthy 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

\$94,260 (\$45.32 per hour) median yearly salary in May 2024

JOB OUTLOOK

7% (Much faster than average) 2024-2034

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 the general education courses before beginning the dental hygiene curriculum. Many local programs have a waitlist, and prerequisites are taken beforehand. Some students move on to a bachelor's degree or a 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 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 for providing services.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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

DEGREE PROGRAMS

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Metropolitan Campus, Cleveland)

Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene

The 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 that incorporates hands-on learning through clinical rotations.

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. The clinical portion of the program is primarily completed on campus.

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

STARK STATE COLLEGE (Canton)

Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene

The program consists of one semester of eligibility courses and four semesters plus one summer semester of academic coursework.

www.starkstate.edu/academics/explore-all-programs/expanded-functions-dental-auxiliary/

RESTORATIVE DENTISTRY - EXTENDED TRAINING OPTIONS:

These programs train certified dental assistants in the art of restorative dentistry, such as fillings.

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY (Cleveland)

Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA) Program

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

STARK STATE COLLEGE (North Canton)

Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA) Technology Program

www.starkstate.edu/academics/programs/expanded-functions-dental-auxiliary/

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREES IN DENTAL HYGIENE:

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY (Columbus)

dentistry.osu.edu/academics/programs/dental-hygiene-programs

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY (Youngstown)

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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DENTAL HYGIENE SCHOOLS IN OHIO: odha.net/students/