

DENTAL HYGIENIST

WHAT DOES A DENTAL HYGIENIST DO?

A Dental Hygienist's role is to encourage patients to look after their teeth and gums, and to

- remove plaque
- clean and polish teeth to help prevent gum disease
- apply antibacterial treatments to reduce decay
- give local anaesthetic under the supervision of a dentist
- apply temporary coatings and sealants to protect teeth
- encourage and demonstrate tooth brushing and flossing

They maintain sterile conditions and occasionally take x-rays. If based in a hospital, they also help patients who are having surgery or complicated orthodontic treatment or those with particular medical conditions to maintain a healthy mouth.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Dental Hygienist courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- good communication skills
- an interest in helping people to look after their teeth and gums
- an interest and ability in science, anatomy and physiology
- the ability to motivate clients to improve their dental hygiene
- excellent communication skills to explain treatments and put patients at ease
- the confidence to handle equipment
- good eyesight and steady hands for carrying out precision work
- the ability to concentrate for long periods

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- To practice as a Dental Hygienist, an applicant must undertake an appropriate course approved by the General Dental Council (GDC). Approved courses can be identified via the course search at: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses>
- There are various study options:
 - a foundation degree in Oral Health Science (2 years in length)
 - an undergraduate diploma in Dental Hygiene, or Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy (2 years in length if dental hygiene or 2.5 years if the course covers dental hygiene and dental therapy)
 - an undergraduate degree in Oral Health Science, or Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy (3-4 years in length)
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

There is 1 relevant undergraduate course in the West Midlands - the BSc (Hons) Dental Hygiene & Therapy at the University of Birmingham - but it does not accept the Access to HE Diploma, nor a BTEC, for entry onto the programme. For details of approved courses visit: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses>
One of the approved courses that will consider applicants with an Access to HE Diploma is shown below.

BSc Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy: Cardiff University (<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years

Entry requirements - qualifications: a minimum of 5 GCSEs at or above grade 4/C. The GCSEs must include GCSE English Language at a minimum of grade 6/B.

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* must have studied for a Science-based Diploma (with Biology or Human Biology) and must have achieved a 60-credit pass including 45 credits at Level 3 (with 30 credits at distinction and 15 at merit).

A *BTEC Extended Diploma in Applied Science (Medical)*, to include Biology and Human Biology, will be considered if the applicant has gained Distinction/Distinction/Merit.

Entry requirements - work experience: none specified

NB Please check with each course provider as entry requirements can change.

NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING

Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority: <https://apps.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/SBCalcs/ic/forms/Personal%20Eligibility%20Calculator/new>

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Dental Hygienists work in NHS and private dental practices - they can also work in hospitals and in community dental services. The Defence Dental Services also employs some Dental Hygienists who provide dental care to the British armed forces throughout the world.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Dental surgeries are warm, well-lit and clean. The Dental Hygienist may wear a white coat/ tunic and surgical gloves as well as a face mask and eye protection for certain procedures. They usually work between 8.30am and 5pm, with occasional evening and weekend duties. If based at a hospital, they may work shifts or be on call. Dental Hygienists who work for a community dental service, usually travel between patients and health centres. Part-time hours and opportunities for self-employment are often available. A self-employed Dental Hygienist would usually see clients at a number of locations.

SALARY

Dental hygienists typically earn £22,128–35,577 per year, with the possibility of a higher salary for an advanced role.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA

The number of Dental Hygienists is increasing and there are more than 6,573 in the UK. Most of the job opportunities are in the NHS and in independent general dental practices. Some dental hygienists are self-employed and work at several dental practices.

INFORMATION SOURCES

- British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy: <http://www.bsdht.org.uk/index.html>
- General Dental Council: <http://www.gdc-uk.org/>
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMOjKhiph3s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLWY7FFimAs>

Updated: May 2018