

DELTA COLLEGE
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES
DENTAL HYGIENIST

Salary Range: \$40,450-\$86,530 per hour

Personal Interests: Work well with other people and have good manual dexterity

Work Environment: Clean, well-lighted offices and often sitting on stools for most of their shift

Description

Dental hygienists clean teeth and provide other preventative oral health care, as well as teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene. Hygienists examine patients' teeth and gums, recording the presence of diseases or abnormalities. They remove calculus, stains, and plaque from teeth; take and develop dental x-rays; and apply cavity preventive agents such as fluorides and pit and fissure sealants. In some states, hygienists administer local anesthetics and anesthetic gas; place and carve filling materials, temporary fillings, and periodontal dressings; remove sutures; and smooth and polish metal restorations.

Dental hygienists also help patients develop and maintain good oral health. For example, they may explain the relationship between diet and oral health, inform patients how to brush and floss their teeth.

Dental hygienists use hand and rotary instruments, and ultrasonics to clean teeth; x-ray machines to take dental pictures; syringes with needles to administer local anesthetics; and models of teeth to explain oral hygiene.

Working Conditions

Dental hygienists work in clean, well-lighted offices, under the direction of a dentist. They work directly with the patients on an individual basis. Hygienists must follow safety procedures to avoid infections from and

between patients and radiation from x-ray equipment. Standing while working sometimes occurs, but typically hygienists sit on a stool at the patient's side.

Training, Other Qualifications

Dental hygienists must be licensed by the state in which they practice. To qualify for licensure, a candidate must graduate from an accredited dental hygiene school, like Delta College, and then pass both a written and a clinical examination. The American Dental Association Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations administers the written examination accepted by all states and the District of Columbia. State or regional testing agencies administer the clinical examination. In addition, most states require an examination on legal aspects of dental hygiene practice.

An associate degree is sufficient for practice in a private dental office. A bachelor or master degree is usually required for research, testing, or clinical practice in public or school health programs.

Job Outlook

Nationally, employment of dental hygienists is expected to increase much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2014, ranking among the fastest growing occupations, in response to increasing demand for dental care and the greater

utilization of hygienists to perform services previously performed by dentists. Job prospects are expected to remain very good, unless the number of dental hygienist program graduates grows much faster than during the last decade, and results in a much larger pool of qualified applicants.

Population growth and greater retention of natural teeth will stimulate demand for dental hygienists. Older dentists, who are less likely to employ dental hygienists, will leave and be replaced by recent graduates, who are more likely to do so. In addition, as dentists' workloads increase, they are expected to hire more hygienists to perform preventative dental care such as cleaning, so they may devote their own time to more profitable procedures.

There were approximately 8,186 Dental Hygienists employed in Michigan in 2004. Almost all of them were employed in private dental offices. An average of 273 job openings is expected through 2014.

Earnings

The type of employer, education, and experience of the individual hygienist and geographic location affect earnings of dental hygienists. Hygienists who work in private dental offices are usually paid an hourly wage, although some are salaried or paid commissions for work performed.

Nationally, median hourly earnings of dental hygienists were \$28.05 in May 2004. The middle 50 percent earned between \$22.72 and \$33.82 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$18.05, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$40.70 an hour.

A salaried dental hygienist in a private office typically receives a paid two- or three-week vacation. Part-time or commissioned dental hygienists in private offices usually have no paid vacation, although occasionally they do receive an increased hourly wage over the full-time dental hygienists.

Annual salaries for dental hygienist in selected areas in Michigan in May 2006 were:

Area	Annual Salary
Ann Arbor	\$62,980
Bay City	\$60,640
Detroit	\$60,960
Grand Rapids	\$56,210
Lansing	\$58,980
Saginaw	\$50,750

Related Occupations

Dental Assistant, Dental Laboratory, Medical Secretary, Office Manager, Physician's Assistant, Physical Therapist Assistants, and Occupational Therapist Assistants are a few of the related careers of a Dental hygienist.

Dentalhygieneprofile.doc Updated SC 10/07
Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, MI Occupational Information System, Eureka, Delta College Catalog, and Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance.

Career Center, D 132
Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072
Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072
Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400, Ext. 9072
<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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