

Quick Guides to the Health Professions

Dental Hygienists

What is a dental hygienist?

A dental hygienist is a registered health care professional whose work focuses on the oral health of an individual or community. Registered dental hygienists are involved in a variety of responsibility areas related to dental hygiene practice such as clinical work, education, health promotion, administration, and research.

What do dental hygienists do?

Dental hygienists assess, diagnose, plan, implement, and evaluate dental hygiene care to help prevent oral disease such as cavities and periodontal (gum, ligament, and bone) disease. Dental hygienists with advanced education may be authorized to prescribe the Schedule 1 drugs used in dental hygiene practice, administer local anaesthesia by injection, prescribe and administer nitrous oxide/oxygen conscious sedation, and perform a number of other restricted activities under the Health Professions Act. Dental hygienists may work independently or as part of health care teams.

Where do dental hygienists work?

Dental hygienists can work in a variety of settings: private dental offices; independent dental hygiene practices; institutions such as hospitals and continuing care facilities; public health, community health, and other outreach programs; the armed forces; regulatory bodies; research or consulting; dental insurance or supply companies; and post-secondary institutions.

Education and preparation

The University of Alberta Dental Hygiene Program is the approved program for registration in Alberta and serves as the benchmark program of study for all persons applying for registration in Alberta.

Registration

Dental hygienists are regulated under the Health Professions Act, 2000, and the Dental Hygienists Profession Regulation, 2006.

Registered dental hygienists have met the educational and additional requirements, set out in the Act and Regulation, for registration with the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta (CRDHA).

Professional organizations

Canadian Dental Hygienists Association
<http://www.cdha.ca>

Contributors to this guide

College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta
<http://www.crdha.ca>

Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice, Western University Canada
<https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/education/ipe/index.html>



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