

Quick Guides to the Health Professions

Dentists

What is a dentist?

A dentist is an individual who practices dentistry. Dentistry is defined as the evaluation, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of conditions of the oral cavity and surrounding area, and their impact on the human body.

What do dentists do?

Dentists diagnose and treat diseases, injuries, and malformations of the teeth and mouth. They improve a patient's appearance by using a variety of dental procedures, and educate on how to better care for teeth and prevent oral disease. They perform surgical procedures such as implants, tissue grafts, and extractions. They may teach future dentists or perform research. Dentists can spot early warning signs in the mouth that may indicate disease elsewhere in the body or that warrant referring patients to dental specialists or physicians.

While most dentists are general practitioners, others may practice in specialty areas such as dental public health, periodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, or orthodontics.

Where do dentists work?

Most dentists work in private practice. However, they also work in academia teaching dentists, public health agencies, hospitals, the military, and other settings.

Education and preparation

Students complete at least two pre-professional years of university education before admission to the four-year University of Alberta Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) program. Students must also write the Canadian Dental Aptitude Test (DAT).

Registration and licensure

A dentist must be registered with the Alberta Dental Association and College to practice dentistry in Alberta. To register, an applicant is required to hold a degree from an accredited dentistry program and successfully complete the examinations from the relevant national and provincial examining boards.

Register as a Dentist in Alberta

<http://www.dentalhealthalberta.ca/index/Pages/register-in-alberta>

Professional organizations

Alberta Dental Association and College

<http://www.dentalhealthalberta.ca>

Alberta Society of Dental Specialists

<http://www.asds.ca>

Canadian Dental Association

<https://www.cda-adc.ca>

Contributors to this guide

Alberta Dental Association and College

<http://www.dentalhealthalberta.ca>

Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice, Western University Canada

<https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/education/ipe/index.html>



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