

Dental Hygienists: Your Essential Oral Health Care Providers

Did you know?

Dental hygienists...

- form the sixth largest regulated health profession in Canada with more than 33,500 practitioners.
- are primary health care professionals who recommend and provide essential preventive and therapeutic clinical care, education, and health promotion to help improve the oral and overall health of Canadians.
- complete a comprehensive assessment to identify any health risks, especially those related to overall health, like high blood pressure and signs of disease.
- collaborate with other health professionals, including dentists, denturists, physicians, nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, chiropractors, massage therapists, and speech-language pathologists.
- work in various settings, including private dental and dental hygiene practices, public health, community clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, educational institutions, and the dental industry.
- can practise independently without the supervision of a dentist in all provinces, improving access to care for vulnerable populations, often through mobile service delivery in remote communities, retirement residences, long-term care facilities, and in homes.
- can be business owners; there are almost 2000 independent dental hygiene businesses in Canada and the number is growing annually.
- are graduates of accredited programs offered by more than 30 colleges and universities across Canada. Dental hygienists are educated in anatomy and physiology, microbiology and infection control, pharmacology, behavioural sciences, oral health sciences, dental hygiene theory and practice, health promotion and disease prevention, nutrition, and oral and overall health.
- must pass the National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination after graduation in all provinces except Québec before they can obtain their registration or licence to practise dental hygiene. Licensing ensures that dental hygienists meet the published practice standards and continuing competence requirements to provide quality oral health care to the public.
- are authorized in some provinces to administer local anesthesia or nitrous oxide, prescribe specific pharmaceutical agents, diagnose periodontal disease and dental caries, provide orofacial myofunctional therapy, use lasers for periodontal therapy, and place and finish permanent tooth restorations.

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Dental hygienists...



Dental hygienists work in collaboration with their clients and other health professionals to provide individualized, systematic oral health care. They:

- ✓ collect a comprehensive health history
- ✓ assess the head, neck, and jaw joints, as well as the mouth, teeth, and gums and identify areas of concern
- ✓ perform an oral cancer screening
- ✓ take and interpret radiographs
- ✓ formulate a dental hygiene diagnosis and develop client-centred oral health goals to help improve oral and overall health
- ✓ treat and prevent gum diseases (i.e., gingivitis and periodontitis) through the removal of dental biofilm and calculus
- ✓ provide education on at-home oral care techniques to address oral conditions and diseases and improve oral health
- ✓ make custom-fitted whitening trays and sports mouthguards
- ✓ provide support for healthy lifestyle choices, such as tobacco cessation strategies and dietary advice, evaluate their client's progress in achieving optimal oral health and establish an appropriate interval for dental hygiene appointments
- ✓ work in collaboration with their clients and other health care professionals to develop an individualized and coordinated approach to care
- ✓ facilitate client referrals to other health professionals or organizations to optimize the client's overall health outcomes

Oral health affects overall health. Dental hygienists are committed to helping all people living in Canada enjoy optimum health by providing individualized, accessible oral care services and treatments. Dental hygienists are your essential oral health care providers.

To learn more about the profession of dental hygiene or your oral health, visit dentalhygienecanada.ca