



What can I do with a Major in...

Dental Hygiene

What is Dental Hygiene at U of L?

The University of Louisville School of Dentistry's bachelor of science degree in Dental Hygiene provides a comprehensive education to prepare future hygienists. The four-year program's curriculum serves as a broad-based foundation for the changing complexities of health care, equipping students to provide comprehensive dental hygiene care in a variety of settings. Classes and experiences emphasize critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Degrees in Dental hygiene at U of L:

Bachelor of Science Degree in Dental Hygiene

Occupational Overview

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

Employment Requirements

Dental hygienists must be licensed by the state in which they practice. To qualify for licensure in nearly all states, a candidate must graduate from an accredited dental hygiene school and pass both a written and clinical examination. The American Dental Association's Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations administers the written examination, which is accepted by all states and the District of Columbia. A minimum of an Associate degree or certificate in dental hygiene is generally required for practice in a private dental office. A Bachelor's or Master's degree usually is required for research, teaching, or clinical practice in public or school health programs.

Career Opportunities in Dental Hygiene:

Private dental offices and dental clinics; Federal, state, and local health departments or associated institutions; Hospitals and nursing homes; Schools or Department of Education; Private business/industry; Correctional facilities; Private and public centers for pediatric, geriatric, and other individuals or groups with special needs; Health maintenance organizations

Dental hygienists held about 158,000 jobs in 2004. Because multiple jobholding is common in this field, the number of jobs exceeds the number of hygienists. More than half of all dental hygienists worked part time—less than 35 hours a week.



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Employers/Industries and Success Strategies:

Build a strong foundation in basic science courses; Gain job shadow, part-time, or intern experience working in a dental office. Dental hygienists should work well with others and must have good manual dexterity, because they use dental instruments within a patient's mouth, with little room for error. High school students interested in becoming a dental hygienist should take courses in biology, chemistry, and mathematics.

Related Links in the Dental Hygiene Discipline:

American Dental Hygienists' Association <http://www.adha.org>

American Dental Association <http://www.ada.org>

<http://louisville.edu/dental/hygiene/admission/lower/>

<http://louisville.edu/dental/hygiene/admission/upp/>

Salary/Outlook Info

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.

Earnings vary by geographic location, employment setting, and years of experience. Dental hygienists may be paid on an hourly, daily, salary, or commission basis.

Benefits vary substantially by practice setting and may be contingent upon full-time employment. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), almost all full-time dental hygienists employed by private practitioners received paid vacation. The ADA also found that 9 out of 10 full-time and part-time dental hygienists received dental coverage. Dental hygienists who work for school systems, public health agencies, the Federal Government, or State agencies usually have substantial benefits.

Salary/Outlook Info



<http://online.onetcenter.org>



<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>