

Dental Hygienists clean teeth and provide other preventive dental 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 select toothbrushes, and show patients how to brush and floss their teeth. Dental hygienists use hand and rotary instruments, lasers, 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.

Important health safeguards include strict adherence to proper radiological procedures, and use of appropriate protective devices when administering anesthetic gas. Dental hygienists also wear safety glasses, surgical masks, and gloves to protect themselves from infectious diseases. 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 and pass both a written and clinical examination.

Monroe Community College has a **Dental Hygiene Care Center** on campus where treatment is provided by dental hygiene students working under the supervision of licensed dental hygienists and dentists. Services include: cleaning your teeth, personal instruction for caring for your teeth and gums, fluoride therapy, instructions for choosing foods for good dental health, dental x-rays, sealants, and recommendations for professional dental care.

Salary Information:

- Dental Hygiene, Associate in Applied Science
\$36,750 Median Salary (Follow-up Study, Monroe Community College Graduates, 2003)
 - Dental Hygienist
\$39,000 Entry Salary (Finger Lakes Region, NYS Department of Labor, 2004)
\$55,100 Average Salary (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004)
- [*Salary varies based on education/advanced degree, work-experience & setting/location.]

Additional Information:

- NYS Dental Hygienist License Requirements:
www.op.nysed.gov/dhygiene.htm
- American Dental Hygienists' Association: www.adha.org

