



# CAREER FOCUS ORAL/ DENTAL HYGIENIST

## Dear Students

They say that the eyes are the windows to your soul and the mouth is the window to your body's well being. Observing and maintaining necessary oral hygiene not only keeps oral infections, diseases and cavities at bay, but as per some studies - it also has quite an impact on artery and heart disease. In this edition we will learn more about what an Oral hygienist do and the requirements to become one.

-Martina

## ORAL HYGIENIST

Oral hygienists (Dental hygienists) are concerned with the promotion of oral health and the prevention of dental disease.

### WHAT DOES AN ORAL HYGIENIST DO?

Most simply, hygienists provide full oral health care, focusing on the prevention and treatment of oral disease. They often work with a dentist, orthodontist, or other dental specialists, and may perform many tasks, including:

- Examining the patient's teeth and gums to identify dental diseases and oral-hygienic conditions.
- Cleaning teeth (scaling and polishing), applying preventive measures such as fluoride and other remedies to the surface of the teeth.
- Preparing and distributing information in the form of brochures, slides, films, and other audio-visual aids. Formulating and illustrating preventive techniques for the display in schools and similar institutions.

Some specialized hygienists might also be licensed to administer local anaesthesia or do sizing for braces and other orthodontic work. In smaller practices, hygienists might also help out with research and office work.

### Inside this issue:

- 1 - What does an Oral Hygienist do?
- 1 - How does an Oral hygienist differ from a Dentist?
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### HOW DOES AN ORAL / DENTAL HYGIENIST DIFFER FROM A DENTIST?

Given all that they do, it is natural to wonder how a hygienist differs from a dentist, and what unique contributions they lend to a dental team. One way to think of the difference is that between general care and specialized procedures. For example, a dental hygienist might do general teeth cleaning, which does not vary much from person to person. But it will be a dentist who diagnoses a cavity and gives you a filling. In general, dentists go through more education and training to do this (though, in some cases, a hygienist will have extensive amounts of education, too). Both professionals, however, go through extensive training and must earn a license to practice. Seeing a skilled dentist costs more per hour, so the more a dental hygienist can take care of a patient's general needs, the less costly the overall visit will be. It is likely, then, that much of your interaction will be with a hygienist, especially if you are visiting the office for a routine cleaning.



## PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS

### Satisfying Aspects

- helping people to improve their health
- the opportunity to work part time
- having a defined area of expertise

### Demanding aspects

- working on Saturdays
- working under pressure
- being limited in the scope of practice



## REQUIREMENTS

### Secondary Education

Possession of at least a **HIGCSE** Grade 12, or equivalent qualification, with matriculation exemption is required for admission to South African universities, and a HIGCSE or outstanding **IGCSE** Grade 12, or equivalent qualification, for enrolment at technikons in South Africa.

### Recommended subjects

Biology, Mathematics and Physical Science (South Africa)

### Tertiary Education

A three-year **B. A.** degree in Oral Hygiene is offered at Medunsa. A University Diploma in Oral Hygiene is offered at the Universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Witwatersrand, Western Cape and Durban-Westville. No formal training is currently offered in Namibia. Oral hygienists are however, registered by the **MHSS** in terms of the Allied Health Services Professions Act.

### Personality

The prospective oral hygienist should display a professional and emphatic attitude towards patients. He/she must be responsible, neat, practical and patient.

### Work Opportunities

Opportunities exist at dental practices and at hospitals.

## DENTAL AND ORAL HYGIENE FACTS

<p><b>86%</b> of women brush twice daily or more</p> 	<p><b>66%</b> of men brush twice daily or more</p> 	<p>It has been found that brushing for most people removes plaque between <b>28-53%</b></p>	<p><b>12%</b> of people floss daily</p>
<p>It is recommended to</p> <p><b>BRUSH 2X A DAY</b>    <b>SEE A DENTIST 2X A YEAR</b>    <b>FLOSS 1X A DAY</b>    <b>REPLACE YOUR TOOTHBRUSH 3 TO 4X A YEAR</b></p>			
 <p><b>PEOPLE WITH DENTAL INSURANCE ARE MORE LIKELY TO VISIT THE DENTIST THAN THOSE WITHOUT DENTAL INSURANCE</b></p>	<p><b>TONGUE CLEANING WITH A TONGUE SCRAPER IS PROVEN TO HELP REDUCE HEART ATTACKS, PNEUMONIA, PREMATURE BIRTHS, DIABETES, OSTEOPOROSIS &amp; INFERTILITY IN MEN</b></p> 		
<p><b>FLOSSING ONCE A DAY CAN INCREASE YOUR LIFE EXPECTANCY BY 6 YEARS</b></p>		<p><b>TRY TO KEEP YOUR TOOTHBRUSH AT LEAST 2 METERS FROM A TOILET BECAUSE BACTERIA AFTER FLUSHING CAN TRAVEL UP TO THIS DISTANCE.</b></p>	
<p><b>36% PLAQUE</b> IS LOCATED BETWEEN TEETH &amp; CAN ONLY BE REACHED WITH FLOSS</p>	<p><b>90%</b> OF LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES HAVE SOME ORAL SYMPTOMS.</p>	 <p><b>ORAL HYGIENE MAKES LIFE LESS AWKWARD</b></p>	

References : Careers in Namibia; Gostudy



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