THE PROFESSION

Dental hygienists are members of an oral healthcare team that includes dentists, dental specialists and other healthcare professions. Dental hygienists provide patients with the instruction and treatment needed to improve and maintain their oral health.

Patient care services routinely performed by a dental hygienist include review of the health history, oral inspection for disease, dental charting, application of fluorides and sealants, exposure of X-rays, scaling and root planing, polishing the teeth, diet counseling, plaque control instruction, and education of people in groups, e.g. geriatric, disabled, and school children.

Dental hygienists are licensed by the state to provide dental hygiene services. To be eligible for state licensure, students must graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program, pass a national written examination and pass a regional clinical examination.

Most dental hygienists are employed in dental offices, clinics or healthcare institutions. The baccalaureate degree may prepare hygienists for office management, college and university teaching, research and marketing.

The employment outlook for dental hygienists is excellent in Texas, as well as throughout the United States. The increasing demand for preventive health care indicates that a career in dental hygiene will continue to offer exceptional full- and part-time employment opportunities for men and women of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds.