

Dentistry

Career Opportunities

Dentist • Dental Hygienist
Dental Laboratory Technician
Dental Assistant



Average Salary Range

\$105,000 – \$210,000

Educational Requirements

Students intending to pursue a career as a dentist should prepare by taking the most challenging high school courses available in science (especially biology and chemistry), math and English, including advanced placement courses.

Dental school consists of a four-year curriculum. The first two years include basic and clinical sciences and preclinic laboratory courses. The third and fourth years provide the clinical experience where the students perform dental care on patients. To be accepted by a school of dentistry, a student must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree or four years of undergraduate college.

In order to practice dentistry in the United States, every dentist has to successfully pass National Boards, which are given in two parts. Part I deals mainly with basic sciences and is taken after the second year of dental school. Part II deals with different areas of dentistry and is taken in the fourth year of dental school. At the end of the last year of dental school, each dentist must successfully pass a state board licensing exam, where specific dental procedures are performed on patients in a clinic setting.

Educational Institutions

Virginia Commonwealth University

Professional Associations

Virginia Dental Association
7525 Staples Mill Road
Richmond, VA 23228
(804) 261-1610
www.vadental.org

American Dental Association
211 E. Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 440-2500
www.ada.org

Dentists (also known as Doctors of Dental Surgery/DDS or Doctors of Dental Medicine/DMD) examine, treat and maintain the teeth, gums, and other hard and soft tissues of the mouth and surrounding structures. They instruct patients about good oral health practices in order to prevent gum disease and tooth loss. Dentists also treat patients who have diseases, injuries, or malformations of the teeth, gums, and mouth.

Dentists:

- diagnose oral conditions.
- plan treatment to restore and maintain optimal oral health.
- administer anesthetics.
- locate and fill cavities; treat diseased gums.
- remove teeth that cannot be treated.
- replace missing teeth; fit and provide dentures.
- teach preventive care for teeth and gums.

There are nine recognized dental specialties:

- **Endodontists** diagnose and treat diseases and injuries of the dental pulp and other dental tissues that affect the vitality of teeth.
- **Oral and maxillofacial radiologists** evaluate head, neck and oral radiographs (X-rays) to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of oral and related disease.
- **Oral and maxillofacial surgeons** provide a broad range of diagnostic and treatment services for diseases, injuries and defects in the head, neck, face, jaws and associated structures.
- **Oral pathologists** study and research the causes and processional effects of diseases of the mouth.
- **Orthodontists** treat problems related to crooked teeth, missing teeth and other abnormalities to establish normal function and appearance.
- **Pediatric dentists** specialize in treating children from birth through adolescence. They also treat special handicapped patients beyond the age of adolescence.
- **Periodontists** diagnose and treat disease of the gums and the bones which support the teeth.
- **Prosthodontists** replace missing natural teeth with fixed or removable substitutes such as dentures, bridges and implants.
- **Public health dentists** specialize in preventing and controlling dental disease and promoting dental health through organized community efforts.

Some dentists teach, practice and/or conduct research in schools of dentistry. Others plan, organize and maintain dental health programs for public health agencies. Dentists may establish their own practices, become part of dental or medical groups, or work in hospitals.

Dental Hygienist

Dental hygienists provide education and clinical services to promote optimal oral health. They provide treatment to help prevent gum disease, tooth decay and other oral health problems. While they most typically work in private dental offices and clinics, dental hygienists also may find employment in health departments, hospitals, nursing homes, school districts, corporate settings, military services, correctional facilities or dental education facilities. Their responsibilities include:

- patient screening procedures, such as review of the health history, dental charting and taking blood pressure, pulse and temperature.
- making and developing dental radiographs (X-rays).
- removing calculus and plaque (hard and soft deposits) from the teeth.
- applying preventive materials to the teeth (e.g. fluoride and sealants).
- teaching patients appropriate oral hygiene techniques to maintain and improve oral health.
- counseling patients regarding good nutrition and its impact on oral health.
- counseling patients regarding the link of oral health to serious systematic health problems.
- performing office management duties.



Average Salary Range

\$25,000 – \$56,000

Educational Requirements

Students intending to pursue a career as a dental hygienist should prepare by taking challenging science, math and English courses. Dental hygienists receive their education through accredited academic programs at community colleges or universities. The majority of community college programs take two years to complete, with graduates receiving associate degrees. This degree allows the hygienist to become eligible for licensure examination. University-based dental hygiene programs may offer bachelor's and master's degrees, each requiring at least two additional years each of further schooling. These advanced degrees are required for careers in teaching, research and public health programs.

Dental hygienists are licensed by each state to provide dental hygiene care and patient education. This exam is a clinical examination involving patient care. Additionally, most states require candidates for licensure to obtain a passing score on the written Dental Hygiene National Board Examination.

Educational Institutions

Germana Community College
Lord Fairfax Community College
Northern Virginia Community College
Old Dominion University
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Highlands Community College
Virginia Western Community College
Wytheville Community College

Professional Associations

Virginia Dental Hygienists'
Association, Inc.
1-888-RDH-VDHA
www.rdh-vdha.org

American Dental Hygiene Association
444 N. Michigan Ave., #3400
Chicago, IL 60611
(312)-440-8900
www.adha.org

Dental Laboratory Technician

Average Salary Range

\$22,000 – \$50,000

Educational Requirements

Students wishing to pursue a career as a dental laboratory technician should take challenging high school courses in science, math and English. Most dental laboratory technicians receive their education and training through a two-year program at a community college, vocational school, technical college or dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Graduates of these programs usually receive associate degrees. In most cases, an individual needs a high school diploma to apply to an accredited program. Dental laboratory technicians are certified by passing an examination that evaluates their technical skills and knowledge.

Some people become dental laboratory technicians through a five-year apprenticeship program, with most of the training acquired on the job.

Educational Institutions

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
Columbia Technology School

Professional Associations

National Association
of Dental Laboratories
1530 Metropolitan Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32308
1-800-950-1150 or (850) 205-5626
www.nadl.org

Dental laboratory technicians make and repair dental appliances, such as dentures, crowns and braces. They usually work in dental offices and commercial laboratories.

Dental laboratory technicians:

- provide essential support service for the dental profession according to the dentist's prescription or work request.
- fabricate dental models from dentist's impressions in order to make repairs and fabricate crowns, bridges, partial and complete dentures and orthodontic appliances based on the dentist's prescription.
- cast various dental alloys for fabrication of crowns, bridges, and removable partial dentures.
- select and arrange artificial teeth using color charts and tooth illustrations for fabrication of complete and partial dentures.
- build, contour and fire dental porcelain in special vacuum porcelain ovens.
- polish alloys, acrylic and porcelain surfaces to clinical acceptability.
- bend and solder stainless steel wire to fabricate orthodontic retainers and various other orthodontic appliances.

Dental laboratory technicians can specialize in various aspects of the work prescribed by dentists and orthodontists: crown and bridge technicians, denture technicians, partial denture technicians, ceramic technicians and orthodontic technicians.

Most dental laboratory technicians work in commercial dental laboratories. Employment opportunities also are available in private dental offices, dental schools, hospitals and companies that manufacture dental prosthetic materials.



Dental Assistant



Dental assistants aid dentists with patient care. They work under the supervision of dentists and also may work with dental hygienists or dental laboratory technicians. Dental assistants usually work in private dental offices but also may work in public health clinics, dental schools, the armed forces and nursing homes. Their functions are:

- assisting the dentist during a variety of dental procedures.
- helping patients feel comfortable before, during and after dental treatment.
- taking and developing radiographs.
- asking about the patient's medical history.
- preparing and sterilizing instruments and equipment for the dentist's use.
- providing patients with instructions for oral care following surgery or other dental treatment procedures, such as the placement of a restoration (filling).
- teaching patients how to brush and floss properly.
- performing office management tasks that often require the use of a personal computer.
- communicating with patients and suppliers of dental and related products.

Average Salary Range

\$17,900 – \$26,500

Educational Requirements

Students wishing to pursue a career in dental assisting should take challenging high school courses in science, math and English. Dental assistants receive their education and training through academic programs at community colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes or universities. Graduates of these programs receive certificates of completion. The length of the program varies with the school but is usually six to 12 months. Dental assistants can become certified by passing an examination administered by the Dental Assisting National Board.

In Virginia, dental assistants are required to be certified in radiology before placing and exposing radiological pictures. Formal one- or two-year programs are offered for dental assistants. Training also may be available on the job.

Educational Institutions

Academy of Dental Technology, Applied Career Training, Chantilly Professional Center, Chesterfield Technology Center, E.C. Glass High School, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Kee Business College, Medical Careers Institute, Medical Learning Center, Norfolk Technical Vocational Center, Practical Dental Assisting of Virginia Beach, Richmond Technical Center, Spotsylvania Vocational Center, Tidewater Tech, Virginia School of Dental Assisting, Virginia School of Technology, Washington County Technical Center, Wytheville Community College

Professional Associations

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Richmond, VA 23228
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American Dental Assistants Association
203 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60601-1225
(312) 541-1550
www.dentalassistant.org

