



# Dental Hygienist

STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CODE 29-2021.00

## What They Do

Clean teeth and examine oral areas, head, and neck for signs of oral disease. May educate patients on oral hygiene, take and develop x-rays, or apply fluoride or sealants.

## Is This For You?

**Work Interests** are described in the following categories (compatible with Holland's Model). People who tend to succeed in this career are:

**Social** – Enjoy working with, communicating with, and teaching people. They like helping or providing service to others.

**Realistic** - Enjoy work activities that involve practical, hands-on problems and solutions.

**Conventional** - Enjoy following a set of procedures and routines with a clear line of authority to follow. May include working with data and details more than ideas.

**Work Values** are aspects of work that are satisfying to you. The following work values are generally associated with this career:

**Relationships** - Allow employees to provide service to others and work with co-workers in a friendly non-competitive environment.

**Support** - Offer supportive management that stands behind employees.

**Independence** – Allow employees to work on their own and make decisions.

**Abilities** reflect a person's aptitude to acquire skills and knowledge. The following abilities are important for success in the career:

- Near Vision
- Problem Sensitivity
- Oral Comprehension
- Oral Expression
- Finger Dexterity
- Arm-Hand Steadiness

## Skills You Need

- Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Active Listening – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, ask questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Critical Thinking – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.
- Judgement and Decision Making – Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.

## Education & Training

Dental hygienists need at least **an associate’s degree in dental hygiene**. They must be certified by the South Dakota State Board of Dentistry.

## Where They Work

The South Dakota Industries which employ the largest number of dental hygienists are:

- Offices of dentists
- Federal Government
- General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
- State Government
- Local Government

## SD Employment & Wages

2016 Workers	2026 Workers	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Average Demand for Workers	Average Annual Wage
630	700	70	11%	50	\$63,240

## Activities: what you might do in a day

- Treat dental problems or diseases.
- Record patient’s medical histories.
- Examine mouth, teeth, gums, or related facial structures.
- Operate diagnostic or therapeutic medical instruments or equipment.
- Process x-rays or other medical images.
- Sterilize medical equipment or instruments.
- Maintain medical equipment or instruments.
- Provide health and wellness advice to patients, program participants, or caregivers.
- Administer anesthetics or sedatives to control pain.
- Direct healthcare delivery programs.
- Treat acute illnesses, infections, or injuries.

## Additional References

### Career OneStop

[www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

### O\*Net Online

[online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org)