Dental Hygienist

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Average Annual Demand for Workers</th>
<th>Median Annual Wage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>$63,240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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
- **O*Net Online**
  - online.onetcenter.org

Updated July 2019