

## Dental assistant



### What do dental assistants do?

Dental assistants work with dentists and dental therapists, assisting them to provide client care and dental health education.

Their duties include preparing, maintaining and managing care delivery environments, recording dental examinations, and managing an adequate supply and rotation of clinic store items. Dental assistants prepare the equipment, dental materials and instruments for each client according to treatment needs. They are also responsible for sterilisation and maintenance of dental instruments and equipment.

Dental assistants are often responsible for the general administrative duties of dental clinics, including service delivery tasks, arranging and recording client appointments, and assisting with inquiries.

*'I love my work. I love dentistry. We work fast, and we work as a team, and the dental assistant is not just there holding a sucker, you're part of that dental team.'* Jenny, dental assistant, Sunbury Community Health Centre Dental Clinic

### What skills do dental assistants need?

Dental assistants need a combination of skills including good hand-eye coordination and the ability to communicate with people of different backgrounds and age groups. They must also be patient and organised to work well in a busy environment, managing competing demands.

### Where do dental assistants work?

Dental assistants work in private and public dental clinics, in schools, universities, community clinics, mobile dental vans, hospitals and institutions such as residential care facilities. They work as part of the dental team, which may include dentists, dental therapists, dental hygienists or prosthetists. They also work with clinic coordinators and practice managers.

### What are the working conditions and career prospects?

Dental assistants are highly skilled members of the dental team. Employment opportunities are available in rural and metropolitan Victoria as well as interstate.

*'I call dentistry my passport to the world because I've been able to travel and have always been able to get employment.'* Marg, dental assistant, Dental Health Services Victoria

### How do I become a dental assistant?

Many dental assistants choose to complete formal studies before working in the clinical setting. In Victoria the preferred qualification is the Certificate III in Dental Assisting, which is completed as a traineeship.

The course involves on-the-job learning and a theoretical component taught at RMIT University. It usually takes 12 months, with 390 hours of theoretical training away from the clinical setting.

For more information contact RMIT University on (03) 9341 1403 or visit [www.rmit.edu.au](http://www.rmit.edu.au).

### Want more information?

More information is available at the following websites:

- **Dentistry in Victoria:** [www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry)
  - Find out what dental assistants have to say about their jobs
  - Find more fact sheets about other careers in dentistry
- **Dental Health Services Victoria:** [www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)
  - Find out about Victoria's public dental service
  - Find more information on dental careers
- **RMIT University:** [www.rmit.edu.au](http://www.rmit.edu.au)
  - Find out more about the course for dental assistants.

Your careers adviser can also provide further information.