

Dental hygienist



What do dental hygienists do?

Dental hygienists use preventive, educational and therapeutic methods to control oral diseases. Through oral examinations they diagnose the nature and severity of periodontal or gum conditions, and plan and undertake a range of preventative and therapeutic treatments. A main emphasis is the prevention of dental and periodontal diseases through oral health promotion and education.

What skills do dental hygienists need?

Communication and interpersonal skills are extremely important, as dental hygienists work with a wide range of people including clients, their families and members of the dental team.

Where do dental hygienists work?

Dental hygienists work with clients of all ages under the supervision of a dentist. They work in the public and private sectors in settings that include hospitals, private dental practices and residential care facilities. They can also work in research, education, management, community health and policy development roles.

What are the working conditions and career prospects?

There is an increasing demand for dental hygienists and there are many job opportunities in metropolitan and rural Victoria.

How do I become a dental hygienist?

In Victoria there are two universities that offer a three-year degree qualification.

The University of Melbourne offers the Bachelor of Oral Health which provides a dual qualification in dental therapy and oral hygiene. Prospective students must undertake the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admissions Test (UMAT), however this prerequisite will change from 2008. Selection for the course is based on a combination of the applicant's ENTER, performance in the UMAT (before

2008) and performance in prerequisite subjects. Detailed information is published by the university and available on the web at www.dent.unimelb.edu.au, or you can call (03) 9341 1500.

La Trobe University commenced the Bachelor of Oral Health Science at its Bendigo campus in 2006. The course provides a dual qualification in dental therapy and oral hygiene. Selection is based on a combination of the applicant's ENTER and performance in prerequisite subjects. The UMAT is not required for this course. For more information contact the School of Human Biosciences on (03) 5444 7411.

Both Universities offer scholarship places which cover the student's contribution for a Commonwealth supported place across the entire degree.

Want more information?

More information is available at the following websites:

- **Dentistry in Victoria:** www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry
 - Find out what dental hygienists have to say about their jobs
 - Find more fact sheets about other careers in dentistry
- **Dental Health Services Victoria:** www.dhsv.org.au
 - Find out about Victoria's public dental service
 - Find more information on dental careers
- **Dental Hygienists' Association of Australia:** www.dhaa.asn.au
 - Find more information about working as a dental hygienist
- **University of Melbourne:** www.dent.unimelb.edu.au
 - Find out more about the course in oral hygiene
- **La Trobe University:** www.latrobe.edu.au/humanbio
 - Find out more about the course in oral hygiene.

Your careers adviser can also provide further information.