



## Dental Hygienists: Your Essential Oral Health Care Providers

### Did you know? Dental hygienists...

- form the sixth largest regulated health profession in Canada with more than 30,200 practitioners.
- are primary health care professionals who recommend and provide essential preventive and therapeutic clinical care, education, and health promotion to help improve the oral health of Canadians.
- collaborate with other health professionals, including dentists, denturists, physicians, nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, chiropractors, and massage therapists.
- work in a variety of settings, including private dental practices, public health units, hospitals and long-term care facilities, educational institutions, dental industry, and even in the client's home using mobile equipment.
- can practise without the supervision of a dentist in most areas of the country; many (6%) have established their own independent dental hygiene businesses to improve access to care, especially for vulnerable populations.
- are graduates of accredited programs offered by more than 30 colleges and universities across Canada. Dental hygienists are educated in the areas of anatomy and physiology, microbiology and infection control, pharmacology, health promotion and disease prevention, and nutrition and health.
- must pass the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board Examination after graduating (all provinces except Québec) and then be registered or licensed by the appropriate provincial or territorial regulatory body before they can practise. These regulatory bodies ensure that dental hygienists meet the high standards required to provide quality oral health care to the public.
- are authorized in some provinces to administer local anesthesia or nitrous oxide, prescribe certain pharmaceutical agents, diagnose dental caries, provide orofacial myofunctional therapy, use lasers for periodontal therapy, and place temporary or permanent tooth restorations.

### Dental hygienists work in collaboration with their clients and other health professionals to provide individualized, systematic oral health care. They:

- ✓ collect a comprehensive health history
- ✓ assess the head, neck, and jaw joint
- ✓ perform an oral cancer screening
- ✓ assess the health of the mouth, oral tissues, teeth, and gums and identify areas of concern
- ✓ take and interpret any recommended radiographs
- ✓ formulate a dental hygiene diagnosis and develop client-centred oral health goals and a care plan to meet their needs
- ✓ remove dental biofilm and calculus from the teeth and provide education on at-home oral care techniques to address gum disease and improve oral health
- ✓ make custom-fitted whitening trays and sports mouthguards
- ✓ provide support for healthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking cessation strategies and dietary advice
- ✓ evaluate their clients' progress in achieving optimal oral health and establish an appropriate interval for dental hygiene appointments

**Oral health affects overall health. Dental hygienists are committed to helping all Canadians enjoy optimum health by providing individualized, accessible oral care services and treatments. Dental hygienists are your essential oral health care providers.**

To learn more about the profession of dental hygiene or your oral health, visit [dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca)