

Did you know?

- Over 95% of U.S. adults who have been treated by a dental hygienist without a dentist on the premises, say they felt comfortable with the care they received.
- 50% of all American youth ages 17 and under have had cavities in their permanent teeth.
- 75% of the U.S. population has some form of periodontal gum disease.
- 50% of Americans do not receive regular oral health care.
- Dental caries, popularly known as tooth decay, is an *infectious, transmissible disease*. Research shows that the presence of bacteria known as *streptococcus mutans* leads to dental caries in children. This decay-causing bacteria is typically transferred from primary caregivers to young children between 22-26 months of age.
- Tobacco is the primary cause of oral cancers. Smoking a pack of cigarettes a day or using smokeless tobacco quadruples the risk of developing oral cancer.
- Two out of three dental hygienists report that they see signs of hypertension and heart disease in some of their patients.
- Three out of four patients don't change their toothbrush as often as they should.
- Oral cancer occurs twice as frequently in men as women.
- Snacking on celery, carrots, or apples helps clear away loose food and debris, as does gum.

Facts from ADHA publication



Oral Health Tips

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day to remove bacteria filled plaque
- Floss daily to remove the plaque between your teeth where they touch (nothing else will do this)
- Use a fluoride toothpaste or rinse
- Limit snacks between meals and choose foods without sugar or starch, these feed the bacteria filled plaque that eats away at the enamel and results in cavities.
- Use a soft-bristled round ended toothbrush. Use a gentle massaging motion on your teeth, gums and tongue. Gentle brushing will not harm the enamel needed to protect your teeth.
- Replace your brush when it becomes worn, at least every three months.
- Visit your dental professional regularly. Biannual visits are appropriate for adults, but some people may need more visits due to gum disease.
- **REMEMBER** brushing and flossing is the only way to prevent gum disease and cavities – and prevention costs almost nothing!

Dental Hygienists ... prevention experts



**Washington State
Dental Hygienists' Association**

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When you visit a dental office, you probably spend time with the **dental hygienist...the prevention expert** in the dental office. A dental hygienist is a *licensed professional* with extensive education and training in oral health care and prevention.

A hygienist's education...

To become a hygienist a student must complete two years of pre-requisites (45-60 credits) i.e. Human Anatomy I & II, General Biology, Microbiology, Chemistry, Human Nutrition, General Psychology, etc. prior to acceptance into an accredited dental hygiene school program.

On average, a dental hygienist has received on average nearly 2,000 hours of classroom study emphasizing basic sciences, dental sciences, dental hygiene theory (including pain control, nutrition, oral health education, and preventive counseling), and Periodontics (the study of gums and their supporting structures). These hours include at least 600 hours of supervised instruction in preclinical and clinical skills.

After graduation, to become licensed in Washington State each hygienist must pass a national board exam and the **Western Regional Examining Board** written and clinical exams on dental hygiene, anesthesia, nitrous oxide and restorative procedures. After licensure, a hygienist continues to advance his or her professional expertise through at least **15 hours** each year of dental hygiene continuing education.



What a Dental Hygienist does....

Dental Hygienists are educated, licensed and dedicated professionals who offer a wide range of examination, cleaning and education services related to oral health care. Your dental hygienist:

- Monitors your health history
- Examines teeth, gums and general condition of the mouth
- Cleans teeth by removing stains and bacteria-filled deposits (plaque and tarter) from above and below the gum lines.
- Provides fluoride treatments and applies sealants to protect the teeth.
- Takes, processes and interprets dental X-rays.
- Checks patients for possible health problems, such as oral cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, or eating disorders and looks for other indicators of general poor health.
- Educates patients and the general public about preventive dental hygiene care, including practical daily dental care skills
- Designs and teaches community and school dental health programs
- Refers patients to dentists as needed.

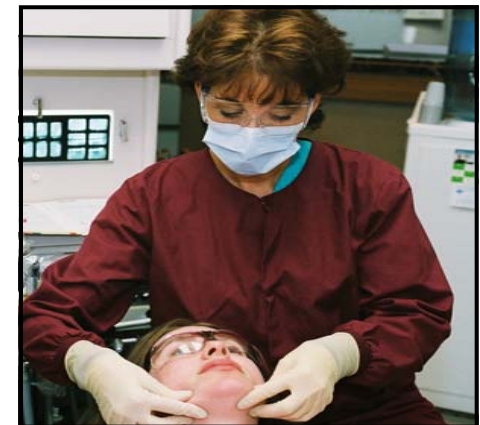


Hygienists in the community....

Dental hygienists do not work just in private dental offices. In Washington, licensed dental hygienists **may practice independently** in nursing homes, hospitals, home health agencies, and in group homes serving the elderly or disabled. They also can practice in public and private schools, on Indian reservations, state institutions and government public health facilities.

For over twenty years independent dental hygienists have worked **safely** with the *most medically compromised* Washington State citizens.

Today, dental hygienists continue efforts in Olympia to expand their ability to provide dental hygiene in **all** settings as an immediate way to improve access to prevention for all residents in Washington State.



For more information contact:

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