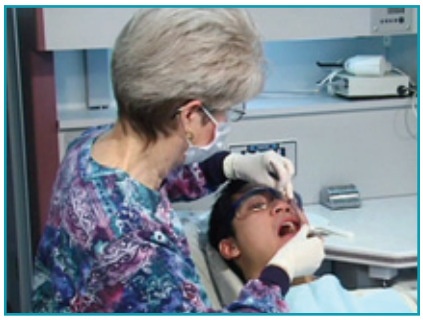
The Hygienist

A dental hygienist is a highly trained and licensed oral health professional who provides you with educational, clinical, and therapeutic services to enhance your oral and overall health.

Hygienists' education and training

Hygienists receive intensive, specialized education and training, which includes courses in chemistry, head and neck anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, pathology, nutrition and pharmacology, as well as courses in advanced dental sciences and dental hygiene.

Prior to graduation, hygienists must complete hundreds of clock hours of supervised instruction in clinical practice.



Preventing gum disease



Removing plaque below the gumline



An excellent resource

What hygienists do

Hygienists serve several functions in the dental office. They check for and treat many dental conditions. They also clean your teeth, use specialized tools and techniques, and educate patients.

A hygienist will carefully examine your teeth, mouth, and gums, and pre-screen for any signs of decay, periodontal disease, or other problems.

As part of the preventive function of the hygienist's job, she will thoroughly clean all surfaces of your teeth, removing plaque, tartar, and stains from above and below your gumline.

During your dental cleaning, your hygienist will use floss, special cleaning compounds, and instruments specifically designed to clean your teeth effectively and comfortably, like ultrasonic cleansers and rotary instruments. She may be involved with the specialized treatment of advanced periodontal disease, such as scaling and root planing. Your hygienist may apply fluoride gels or other treatments.

She also takes and develops dental x-rays so the dentist can view them and quickly diagnose any problems that may exist.

Your hygienist will teach you how to effectively care for your teeth at home to help you prevent decay and periodontal disease, show you how to select the proper toothbrush and dental floss, and demonstrate the most effective techniques for brushing and flossing.

Your hygienist may also explain the relationship between a healthy diet and dental health, offering suggestions about which foods to select and which to avoid.

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