

Hygienists

Hygienists' education and training

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

Hygienists receive intensive, specialized education and training that includes courses in chemistry, physiology, nutrition, microbiology, head and neck anatomy, oral pathology, pharmacology, and radiology. Additional courses also include advanced dental science and dental hygiene.

Prior to graduation, a hygienist must pass rigorous tests and complete hundreds of clock hours of supervised instruction in clinical practice.



Hygienist offering suggestions



Hygienist taking x-rays



Hygienist cleaning teeth



Hygienist performing an oral exam

What hygienists do

A hygienist serves many functions in the dental office. The hygienist carefully examines your teeth, mouth, and gums and looks for any signs of decay, periodontal disease, oral cancer, or other problems. A hygienist also takes dental x-rays so the dentist can view them and quickly diagnose any problems that may exist.

As part of the preventive function of the job, your hygienist uses specialized instruments and techniques to thoroughly clean all surfaces of your teeth. These procedures comfortably remove plaque, tartar, and stains from above and below your gumline. A hygienist is often involved with the specialized treatment of gum disease, such as scaling and root planing. A hygienist may also apply fluoride gels or other treatments.

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

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

Your hygienist is an excellent educational resource who can help you and your family keep your healthy smiles for a lifetime.