

## WHAT THEY DO

There are many promising occupations in the health field. Prepare yourself for growing career opportunities in dental care.

Dental assistants assist dentists to examine and treat patients. Their work is varied as they anticipate the needs of dentists with the many different kinds of procedures carried out in dental practices. Dental assistants prepare and maintain dental instruments and equipment and often perform clerical duties.

Dental hygienists are licensed health care professionals who most often assess and provide dental hygiene treatment to patients to promote and maintain healthy teeth and gums. They also perform complex services to treat infections and disease.

Both dental assistants and dental hygienists instruct patients in oral hygiene procedures to prevent disorders and diseases.

## MORE INFORMATION

### Programs

**NSCC Nova Scotia Community College**  
[www.nsc.ca](http://www.nsc.ca)

**Dalhousie University**  
Search School of Dental Hygiene  
[www.dal.ca](http://www.dal.ca)

### Professional Organizations

**Nova Scotia Dental Assistants Association**  
[www.nsdha.ns.ca](http://www.nsdha.ns.ca)

**Canadian Dental Assistants Association**  
[www.cdha.ca](http://www.cdha.ca)

**Nova Scotia Dental Hygienists Association**  
[www.nsdha.ns.ca](http://www.nsdha.ns.ca)

**Canadian Dental Hygienists Association**  
[www.cdha.ca](http://www.cdha.ca)

**Dental Hygiene Educators Canada (DHEC)**  
[www.dhec.ca](http://www.dhec.ca)

**Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia**  
902-420-0083  
Email: [pdbs@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:pdbs@hfx.eastlink.ca)

### Career and Job Prospects

**Nova Scotia Career and Labour Market Information**  
For up-to-date information visit  
[www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca](http://www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca)

### Job Futures

**Canada's National Career and Education Planning Tool**  
[www.jobfutures.ca](http://www.jobfutures.ca)

### Human Resources and Skill Development Canada

**National Occupational Classification (NOC)**  
[www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca](http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca)

#### NOC Code Search

Dental Assistant: 3411  
Dental Hygienist: 3222

  
**NOVA SCOTIA**  
Education

Career Pathways Series

DENTAL ASSISTANTS  
AND HYGIENISTS



Information for High School Students

## PERSONAL SKILLS

# NEEDED

Dental assistants and hygienists require a dedication to attending to the physical and emotional needs of others.

People who succeed have skills and abilities that include the following:

- › excellent speaking and writing skills
- › physical dexterity, precision, and endurance
- › sound judgement/decision-making skills
- › good interpersonal skills, including patience, reliability, and teamwork
- › thoroughness and attention to detail
- › technological skills



## WHERE THEY

# WORK

Dental assistants and hygienists may work in clinical or community settings in

- › private dental offices
- › community clinics and schools
- › hospitals and senior care facilities
- › armed forces
- › correctional institutions

Dental hygienists may also work in

- › federal, provincial, and municipal health departments
- › post-secondary education
- › research

## WHAT THEY

# EARN

### Dental Assistant

Average hourly income: \$16.00  
Minimum: \$11.00  
Maximum: \$21.75

### Dental Hygienist

Average hourly income: \$25.25  
Minimum: \$12.00  
Maximum: \$34.25



## REQUIRED

# COURSES

Most dental assisting programs require academic grade 12 chemistry and biology.

### High School

To prepare for a dental hygiene program, complete biology, chemistry, mathematics, and English.

### Post Secondary

Dental hygienists in Nova Scotia attend university to complete one year of preparatory courses, mainly sciences, followed by a two-year diploma or degree program. Graduates of the degree program perform duties of more depth and scope of responsibility than diploma graduates, and can choose from a much broader range of options for employment in clinical or community settings.

It is recommended that graduates of a dental hygiene program successfully complete the national exam set by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA). To practise dental hygiene in Nova Scotia, graduates must meet the requirements of the provincial licensing board, the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia.

For program admission and licensing requirements, visit the links on the back of this brochure.

**People of diverse identities, backgrounds, and experiences find dental assisting and dental hygiene to be challenging and rewarding careers that offer a broad range of mobility options. Both men and women are employed in a range of practice settings, often enjoying job security at good rates of pay.**

### What is the difference between dental assistants and dental hygienists?

Dental assistants are most often trained at community colleges for a period of one year including clinical experience. Their professional responsibilities differ from dental hygienists, in scope and depth, as they always work to assist dentists.

Typically, dental hygienists treat their own patients, providing scaling, polishing, fluoride treatment, and hygiene education. They keep their own patient records and inform dentists about patient care information.