DENTAL HYGIENIST

WHAT DOES A DENTAL HYGIENIST DO?
A Dental Hygienist's role is to encourage patients to look after their teeth and gums, and to
- remove plaque
- clean and polish teeth to help prevent gum disease
- apply antibacterial treatments to reduce decay
- give local anaesthetic under the supervision of a dentist
- apply temporary coatings and sealants to protect teeth
- encourage and demonstrate tooth brushing and flossing

They maintain sterile conditions and occasionally take x-rays. If based in a hospital, they also help patients who are having surgery or complicated orthodontic treatment or those with particular medical conditions to maintain a healthy mouth.

SKILLS REQUIRED
Applicants for Dental Hygienist courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:
- good communication skills
- an interest in helping people to look after their teeth and gums
- an interest and ability in science, anatomy and physiology
- the ability to motivate clients to improve their dental hygiene
- excellent communication skills to explain treatments and put patients at ease
- the confidence to handle equipment
- good eyesight and steady hands for carrying out precision work
- the ability to concentrate for long periods

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED
- To practice as a Dental Hygienist, an applicant must undertake an appropriate course approved by the General Dental Council (GDC). Approved courses can be identified via the course search at: http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses
- There are various study options:
  - a foundation degree in Oral Health Science (2 years in length)
  - an undergraduate diploma in Dental Hygiene, or Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy (2 years in length if dental hygiene or 2.5 years if the course covers dental hygiene and dental therapy)
  - an undergraduate degree in Oral Health Science, or Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy (3-4 years in length)
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES
There is 1 relevant undergraduate course in the West Midlands - the BSc (Hons) Dental Hygiene & Therapy at the University of Birmingham - but it does not accept the Access to HE Diploma for entry onto the programme. For details of approved courses visit: http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses

One of the approved courses that accepts applicants with an Access to HE Diploma is shown below.

Combined Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy: University of Liverpool (https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/)
Length of study: 27 months
Entry requirements - qualifications: 5 GCSE subjects at Grade C or above which must include a Science, English Language and Mathematics. A science subject must be offered from the following list: Biology, Human Biology, Modular Biology, Dual Science Award, Human Physiology, Chemistry or Physics. Applicants with an Access to HE Diploma should have studied an Access course with science or health-related subject content, and are expected to pass 45 credits at level 3. The Access Course should have been completed in two years. They do not currently accept BTEC Level 3 qualifications.
Entry requirements - work experience: Candidates are expected to show a range of skills, and some work experience is beneficial before application.

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.
NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING
Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority: https://apps.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/SBCalcs/ic/forms/Personal%20Eligibility%20Calculator/new

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS
Dental Hygienists work in NHS and private dental practices - they can also work in hospitals and in community dental services. The Defence Dental Services also employs some Dental Hygienists who provide dental care to the British armed forces throughout the world.

WORKING CONDITIONS
Dental surgeries are warm, well-lit and clean. The Dental Hygienist may wear a white coat/ tunic and surgical gloves as well as a face mask and eye protection for certain procedures. They usually work between 8.30am and 5pm, with occasional evening and weekend duties. If based at a hospital, they may work shifts or be on call. Dental Hygienists who work for a community dental service, usually travel between patients and health centres. Part-time hours and opportunities for self-employment are often available. A self-employed Dental Hygienist would usually see clients at a number of locations.

SALARY
Dental hygienists earn £21,692 - 34,876 per year.
NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA
The number of Dental Hygienists is increasing and there are more than 6,573 in the UK. Most of the job opportunities are in the NHS and in independent general dental practices. Some are self-employed and work at several dental practices.

PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE (Figures are for the whole health support sector)
Full-time: 57%; Part-time: 34%; Self-employed: 9%

INFORMATION SOURCES
- British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy: http://wwwbsdht.org.uk/index.html
- General Dental Council: http://www.gdc-uk.org/
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/
- NHS Careers: http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/
- Prospects: https://www.prospects.ac.uk/
- UCAS: https://www.ucas.com/

VIDEO CLIP
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMOjKhiph3s

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