
What is Dental Hygiene?

Dental Hygiene is a career designed for helping patients maintain and improve their dental and oral health.

Dental Hygienists clean teeth and teach clients how to prevent tooth decay and gum disease. They discuss general health issues with patients and update dental charts. They inspect patients' teeth for deposits and decay, and look for any disease in the gums. They take x-rays, use dental instruments to clean teeth, apply sealant and fluoride. Some may be licensed to apply anesthesia.

Dental Hygienists need good interpersonal communications in their continuous contact with patients and team members. They also need excellent manual dexterity.

What can I do with a degree in Dental Hygiene?

Many Dental Hygienists begin their careers directly after earning a specific Dental Hygiene Associate degree and passing all licensing requirements. It is also possible to continue education in Dental Hygiene with a Bachelor degree in Dental Hygiene or a Bachelor of Applied Science in Allied Health, with a Dental Hygiene emphasis.

Related Majors

Dentist
Dental Assistant
Surgical Technologist

Where can I study Dental Hygiene?

Many community colleges in Washington offer degrees in Dental Hygiene, locally including: Lake Washington Institute of Technology (www.lwtech.edu/academics/dental-hygiene/), Shoreline Community College (www.shoreline.edu/dental/), Seattle Central College (healthcare.seattlecentral.edu/programs/dental-hygiene), and many others. Some of these colleges now offer Bachelor of Applied Science degrees in Dental Hygiene. Additionally, Eastern Washington University offers a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene (www2.ewu.edu/chsph/programs/dental-hygiene).

How do I get started?

We are here to help you get started on your path to becoming a Dental Hygienist! Bellevue College does not have a Dental Hygiene program but students may complete all the prerequisites for Dental Hygiene programs at BC.

Dental Hygiene programs are academically highly competitive for entry, often needing much higher than a 3.0 GPA in prerequisite coursework. They also typically require some form of experience in a dental office and an entry exam.

Step One: Research

Making an informed decision about a major requires active research. Here are steps you should complete while determining whether a degree in Dental Hygiene is the best fit for you:

- Log on to **wois.org** (obtain a [site key](#) from the BC Career Center), or use the national occupations website O*NET (onetonline.org) to learn about the requirements, skills, and demands for working as a Dental Hygienist.
- After researching the career, if you wish to pursue a degree in Dental Hygiene, please review individual college websites to learn the unique entry requirements for each program. There are usually a number of prerequisites to complete, minimum GPA requirements, and possibly even volunteer or other healthcare experience required before applying, as well as letters of recommendation, entry exams (such as the TEAS test), and immunizations, etc.
- Every college and major concentration **may require different prerequisite courses** to be completed prior to enrolling in a Dental Hygiene program. For more info, contact a departmental representative at your potential college.

Step Two: Pick a BC Degree

Though it is not always required to complete a transfer associates degree to prepare for Dental Hygiene, if your plan is to earn a transfer associates degree, the one with the most flexibility to meet Dental Hygiene prerequisites is the **Associate in Arts & Sciences Direct Transfer Agreement (AAS-DTA)** degree.

Please review the degree you will use with your funding source, especially if using Financial Aid, the GI Bill, or Workforce Education funding, as some restrictions may apply.

Step Three: Make a Plan

The table below has a list of prerequisite courses for local Dental Hygiene programs. Since schools may require different prerequisites to those listed below, and because prerequisites can change annually, we strongly encourage you to research your school(s) of choice. Dental Hygiene programs can vary greatly on when they accept applications, which prerequisites must be done by the application deadline, and when they accept/enroll students into the program. We recommend that you make your own table with application due dates, necessary tests and/or letters of recommendation, and other required admissions materials.

Dental Hygiene Program Prerequisite Courses			
Prerequisites	Local Institutions		
	Lake Washington Tech	Shoreline	Seattle Central
BIOL& 160	<i>(as prereq to other BIOL)</i>	<i>(as prereq to other BIOL)</i>	App
BIOL& 241	App	App	App
BIOL& 242	App	App	App
BIOL& 260	App	App	App
CHEM& 121	App	<i>(as prereq to CHEM& 131)</i>	App
CHEM& 131	App	App	App
MATH 130	Adm	App - or MATH& 107	App
PSYC& 100	Adm - or PSYC& 200	App	App/Adm*
ENGL& 101	App	App	App
ENGL& 201	Adm		App/Adm*
NUTR& 101	Adm	App - or NUTR 100	Adm
Intercultural Comm.	Adm - CMST 280	Adm-CMST 280 / SOC 256	App/Adm* - CMST 280
Humanities		Adm - BUS 120	App/Adm* (any from list)
CMST& 210 or 220	Adm	App - or CMST& 101	
SOC& 101	Adm		
Application Deadlines	March	February	October

App = courses must be completed by the application deadline. Adm = courses must be completed before starting the program

* Seattle Central requires English 101 and two non-science courses to be completed at the time of application

What should I do now?

Now that you have had a chance to review Dental Hygiene prerequisites, a suggested degree to follow while at BC, and know about some of the local Dental Hygiene programs, a great next step is to meet with an advisor. You can make an appointment with the Science Division/Pre-Professional Health Advisor by contacting the Academic Advising front desk located on the second floor of the B building (or by calling 425-564-2212), or through the Science Division in L200 (or by calling 425-564-2321).

This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student's responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which they intend to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as these vary and are subject to change without notice.

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