

RDH: Prevention Specialist in Oral Health

The RDH designation stands for Registered Dental Hygienist. It assures patients that a dental hygienist has completed a nationally accredited dental hygiene program, has successfully passed a national written and state clinical examination, and has received a state license to provide preventive oral health care services and patient education.

Dental hygienists who graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program receive an average of nearly 2000 hours of classroom study in academic subjects emphasizing basic sciences, dental sciences, dental hygiene theory (including pain control, nutrition, oral health education, and preventive counseling), and periodontics (the study of gums and their supporting structures). These hours include at least 600 hours of supervised instruction in preclinical and clinical skills.

Dental hygienists screen for serious health problems, such as HIV infection, oral cancers, eating disorders, substance abuse, and diabetes.



Dental hygienists can work as clinicians, educators, researchers, administrators, managers, preventive program developers, consumer advocates, sales and marketing managers, editors, and consultants. Clinical dental hygienists may work in a variety of health care settings such as private dental offices, schools, public health clinics, hospitals, managed care organizations, correctional institutions, or nursing homes.

Source:

- American Dental Hygienists' Association, www.adha.org;
- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, www.nidcr.nih.gov

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