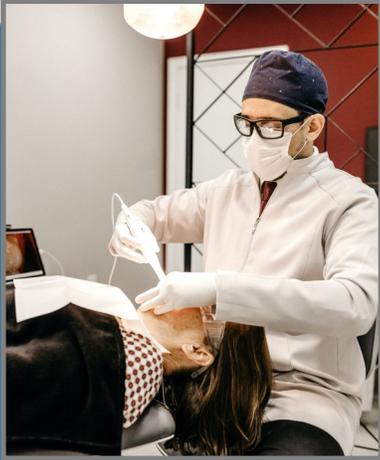


February 2021

# HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS

The Rural AHEC Student Newsletter



## February's Healthcare Career Focus:

### Dental Hygienist

Dental Hygienists are the “front line” of dental care. They provide information about proper cleaning, flossing, and other care of teeth, as well as hands-on cleaning of teeth and gums. Dental hygienists use dental technology, special materials such as fluoride and other protective agents, and personal protective equipment to safely and effectively deliver services that promote optimal dental health. They offer support to dentists and other dental professionals.

### What might I do as a Dental Hygienist?

Practice in a variety of settings, including dentist and oral surgeon offices, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, etc

Assess oral tissues and overall health to determine if there may be disease risks

Perform the process of care needed to promote good dental hygiene including x-rays and plaque removal

Develop dental hygiene diagnoses based on observations during care

Develop patient-centered treatment care plans for patients

Administer protective sealants if warranted and desired

Educate patients regarding oral hygiene and preventative oral care and put them at ease during visits

Engage patients in discussion about what is working and not working regarding their oral care regimen and encourage them to collaborate with dentist and others



### How do I become a Dental Hygienist?

- Attend and graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program—may be a two or a four year program in science, applied science or dental hygiene
- Take and pass a written National Dental Hygiene Board exam, a state (or regional) exam and a state ethics exam
- Apply for a license to work in the state in which you desire to practice
- May pursue a graduate degree in dental hygiene
- Years of higher ed: 2—6years

**Average Salary:**  
**\$76,000 in NYS**

## **What is it really like to be a Dental Hygienist?**

The need for professionals in this field will increase at a faster rate than most careers through the next decade, and the career outlook is very bright. One reason for this is that medical professionals are increasingly linking good oral health to better overall health outcomes. As a dental hygienist, you may work with some advanced medical technology, such as cone beam computed tomography, 3-D imaging which helps dental professionals with diagnosing and complex treatment planning.

If you are interested in becoming a dental hygienist, you should work to develop the following skills:

- **Attention to detail and focus** when providing aspects of care
- **Communication skills** to effectively work with all patients
- **Compassion** when encountering people who experience anxiety
- **Manual dexterity and control** as you work with sharp tools to remove plaque, administer sealants, and take x-rays



Watch this short video about what dental hygienists do: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L98ewqNTXE4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L98ewqNTXE4&feature=emb_logo)

See how one hygienist goes through her day : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SKiWwepNDo>

and another: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD6iQFL8ELI>

***“...dental hygiene... one of the best jobs for working moms because it can be performed on a part-time basis and it pays well...”***

Trey Tepichin  
Lawyer and Economist at Cloud Dentistry

***“Since they talk with you before, during and after your dental exams, hygienists are true partners of your dentist—helping you understand the best ways to manage your oral health...”***

Anonymous

***“Dental hygienists with advanced degrees have broader opportunities for alternative careers within dentistry, dental education and health care delivery ...”***

Explorehealthcareers.org

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Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) is one of nine centers in the New York State Area Health Education Center (NYS AHEC) organization. Our mission is to improve health and healthcare through education.

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