Dental hygienists use instruments to clean and polish teeth, take X-rays, administer local anesthetics, and instruct patients in correct brushing and cleaning habits.

A high school diploma or GED may be required by Dental Hygiene schools. There are both associate and bachelor degree programs in dental hygiene to prepare for careers in dental hygiene. The associate degree program leads to a career in a clinic or private office while the bachelor degree program leads to careers in dental public health, teaching, and makes the individual more marketable for jobs. Additionally, there are master degree programs which lead to careers in dental hygiene education. Dental hygiene education consists of four areas of study: basic education, basic science, dental science, and dental hygiene classes.

## Prerequisite Coursework Required by Most Programs

| **Prerequisite** | **Required Coursework** |
| --- | --- |
| One semester of English | English 101 |
| Chemistry | Varies according to campus. Some programs require one semester (Chemistry 51 or 60) while others require one year (Chemistry 101 and 102). |
| One semester of Anatomy | Anatomy 1 |
| One semester of Physiology | Physiology 1 |
| One semester of Microbiology | Microbiology 1 or 20 |
| One semester of Psychology | Psychology 1 |
| One semester of Sociology | Sociology 1 |
| One semester of Speech | Speech 101 |

Note: You need a “C” or higher in these courses. All courses should be taken for a letter grade, not Credit/No Credit.

## Dental Hygiene School Selection Criteria

* Successful completion of all prerequisites with a minimum of "C" in all Dental Hygiene prerequisite courses.
* Grade point average of all general prerequisite college courses, prerequisite science courses, and overall.
* Previous dental experience and licenses.

## Salary Information

The median wage in 2021 in California was $117,423 annually ([labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/](https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/oes-employment-and-wages.html)). The median is the point at which half of the workers earn more and half earn less.

## Recommended Websites

| **Website** | **Website address** |
| --- | --- |
| American Dental Association | [ada.org/en/education-careers/careers-in-dentistry/dental-team-careers/dental-hygienist](https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/careers-in-dentistry/dental-team-careers/dental-hygienist) |
| American Dental Hygienists’ Organization | [adha.org/](http://www.adha.org/) |
| Dental Education Association | [adea.org/](https://www.adea.org/) |

## Select Degree Dental Hygiene School Websites

| **Website** | **Website address** |
| --- | --- |
| Oxnard College | [oxnardcollege.edu/departments/academic/dental-hygiene-program](https://www.oxnardcollege.edu/departments/academic/dental-hygiene-program) |
| Pasadena City College | [pasadena.edu/academics/divisions/health-sciences/dental-programs/dental-hygiene/index.php](https://pasadena.edu/academics/divisions/health-sciences/dental-programs/dental-hygiene/index.php) |
| University of Southern California | [dentistry.usc.edu/programs/dental-hygiene/](https://dentistry.usc.edu/programs/dental-hygiene/) |
| West Los Angeles College – Completion Pathway Program | [wlac.edu/Dental/Bachelor-Degree-Completion.aspx](http://www.wlac.edu/Dental/Bachelor-Degree-Completion.aspx) |
| West Los Angeles College – Bachelor Degree | [wlac.edu/Dental/Bachelor-Dental-Hygiene.aspx](http://www.wlac.edu/Dental/Bachelor-Dental-Hygiene.aspx) |
| Cerritos College | <https://www.cerritos.edu/dental-hygiene/default.htm> |

Note: Information is subject to change without notice. Check with the individual campus for the most up-to-date information. *Web site links are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and/or Los Angeles Pierce College (LAPC) of any of the products, services or opinions of the corporation or organization or individual. The Los Angeles Community College District and/or Los Angeles Pierce College bears no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of the external site or for that of subsequent links. Contact the external site for answers to questions regarding its content.*