

Pre-Dental Hygiene

The Associate of Science degree in Pre-Dental Hygiene at Walters State community College is designed for the student who plans to apply for admission to the Dental Hygiene program at ETSU. Two years of course work at Walters State plus two years of study in the dental hygiene program are required. The link for the Natural Science Division at Walters State is: <http://www.ws.edu/science/default.asp>

Career and Major Information

A degree from an accredited dental hygiene school and a state license are required for this job.

Dental hygienists rank among the fastest growing occupations.

Dental hygienists remove soft and hard deposits from teeth, teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene, and provide other preventive dental care. They examine patients' teeth and gums, recording the presence of diseases or abnormalities.

Dental hygienists use an assortment of different tools to complete their tasks. Hand and rotary instruments and ultrasonic devices are used to clean and polish teeth, including removing calculus, stains, and plaque. Hygienists use x-ray machines to take dental pictures, and sometimes develop the film. They may use models of teeth to explain oral hygiene, perform root planning as a periodontal therapy, or apply cavity-preventative agents such as fluorides and pit and fissure sealants. In some states, hygienists are allowed to administer anesthetics, while in others they administer local anesthetics using syringes. Some states also allow hygienists to place and carve filling materials, temporary fillings, and periodontal dressings; remove sutures; and smooth and polish metal restorations.

Dental hygienists also help patients develop and maintain good oral health. For example, they may explain the relationship between diet and oral health or inform patients how to select toothbrushes and show them how to brush and floss their teeth.

Hygienists sometimes make a diagnosis and other times may prepare clinical and laboratory diagnostic tests for the dentist to interpret. Hygienists sometimes work chair side with the dentist during treatment.

Related Career Titles

[Dental assistants](#), [medical assistants](#), [occupational therapist assistants and aides](#), [physical therapist assistants and aides](#), [physician assistants](#), and [registered nurses](#)

Web Sites

For information on a career in dental hygiene, including educational requirements, contact:

Division of Education, American Dental Hygienists Association, 444 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 3400, Chicago, IL 60611. Internet: <http://www.adha.org>

For information about accredited programs and educational requirements, contact:

Commission on Dental Accreditation, American Dental Association, 211 E. Chicago Ave., Suite 1814, Chicago, IL 60611. Internet: <http://www.ada.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos070.htm>

Salary Information

Median hourly earnings of dental hygienists were \$30.19 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$24.63 and \$35.67 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$19.45, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$41.60 an hour. Local or regional salaries may be lower.

Citation: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition*, Dental Hygienists, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos097.htm>