

# Dental Assistant



Health  
South Western Sydney  
Local Health District

## What is a Dental Assistant?

Dental assistants prepare patients for oral examination and assist other oral health care staff, such as dentists, dental therapists, dental hygienists and dental prosthetists in providing treatment to the teeth, mouth and gums. Dental assistants also carry out chair-side and reception duties.

## Roles of a Dental Assistant

- Receive and greet patients make them comfortable and prepare them for necessary dental procedures
- Prepare surgery for dental treatment with correct instruments/materials ready for use as directed by the clinician
- Record findings from the oral examination
- During oral examination or treatment, provide instruments and dispense materials as directed by the clinician
- Provide pre- and post-operative instructions for patients undergoing general or local anaesthesia
- Clear the patient's mouth of saliva or dental materials used in the treatment by operating handheld suction or air and water-spraying equipment
- Clean and sterilise the instruments used after treatment, clean and tidy the surgery and implement standard decontamination procedures for infection control
- Process, mount and file dental X-rays
- Maintain and re-stock dental supplies
- Perform routine care and maintenance of dental equipment and instruments
- Make appointments for patients, keep records of patients' treatments and send out reminders for routine dental check up
- Prepare accounts and collect payments
- Communicating with patients and suppliers and carry out other administrative duties.

## Career Opportunities

Dentists in private practices and clinics employ most dental assistants. Some dental assistants undertake further study to become dental hygienists. Others gain further administrative experience and possibly qualifications to progress to practice management. It is a large occupation with good employment opportunities. SWSLHD Oral Health Services regularly advertise Dental Assistant positions.

## Qualifications Required

There are three pathways to becoming a dental assistant. The first pathway involves the traditional entry of employers providing on-the-job training. The second pathway involves you undertaking a Traineeship in Dental Assisting. Entry requirements for both entry pathways may vary, but employers generally require Year 10 with good results in English. Take high school courses in health, sciences, English, mathematics, speech and psychology.

The length of training under a traineeship can vary and may involve both on and off-the-job components. The off-the-job training is provided through registered training organisations, including TAFE. Details of the training may vary depending on the needs of the employer and are finalised as part of the training agreement.

The third pathway involves taking a full time certificate course with a registered provider. Entry to the following certificate courses also requires the completion of Year 10 with good results in English. Alternate entry may be available. Contact the institution and discuss your circumstances. Apply for work experience in a dental practice or community dental clinic. Ask your career adviser about the possibility of starting some of this training in school. Dental Assistants can work in various organisations. For more information visit: [info@nswdaa.asn.au](mailto:info@nswdaa.asn.au).

### **Supervision Required**

The Senior Dental officer and the Senior Dental Assistant provide clinical supervision for Dental Assistants. A comprehensive orientation program is provided for all new staff members with ongoing support.

### **What sort of person should I be?**

- Have a high standard of ethics
- Have an interest in health care work
- Have a good sense of caring and sensitivity
- Enjoy interacting with people

### **Personal Requirements of a Sterilising Technician**

- Good with hands
- Able to concentrate and follow instructions
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Good organisational ability and time management skills
- Interested in health care work.