



Dental Assistant

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Job Description:

Dental assistants help dentists with patient care, office tasks, and lab duties.

Gross Monthly Income:

\$2,300

Wages:

Average median yearly pay is about 28,000 a year in Utah.

Schedule: May work part or full time. Usually regular office hours, possibly some Saturdays or longer hours on certain days.



Advancement:

Without further education, opportunities for advancement are limited. Some dental assistants who work in the front office become office managers. Other dental assistants go back to school to become dental hygienists or dentists.

Education & Experience:

- ◆ Completed High School
- ◆ Complete a formal training program

High

School Courses:

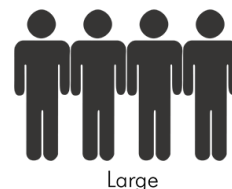
- ◆ Computer Fundamentals
- ◆ Dental Assisting
- ◆ Health Education
- ◆ Keyboarding
- ◆ Medical Office

Work Conditions:

- ◆ High level of social interaction. Constantly talk with patients, dentists, and medical staff
- ◆ Sometimes deal with patients that are unpleasant, angry, or discourteous.
- ◆ Work as part of a team. This is extremely important because they directly assist the dentist.
- ◆ Work very near other people and have little space between self and others.
- ◆ Repeat the same tasks over and over, such as handling instruments and operating x-ray equipment.
- ◆ Many are required to do office work like filing, scheduling appointments, billing, etc.

Travel: None

Job Outlook:



Hours a Week:

30

Leisure Time:

High

Knowledge:

- ◆ Medicine & Dentistry
- ◆ Customer & Personal Services
- ◆ English Language

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Overview

Perhaps no procedure is feared more than getting your wisdom teeth out. Everyone has heard about the puffiness, the nausea, the bruising, and the pain. Oh, the pain! While the actual procedure may not be nearly as bad as the tall tales around it, there's no way around the nerves you feel walking through the dentist's door. This is where dental assistants come in. They set you up in the dental chair, answer questions, and make you feel at ease. They often help during the procedure, assuring you with their presence. And hopefully, when it's all over, they say, "See, that wasn't so bad!"

Dental assistants perform a variety of tasks, depending on the dental office they work in. They work closely with dentists as they examine and treat patients. They make patients as comfortable as possible in the dental chair. They obtain dental records and prepare patients for their exam. Dental assistants hand instruments and materials to dentists during procedures. They use suction devices to keep patients' mouths dry and clear. They also sterilize the instruments and equipment and prepare tray setups. When patients have surgery, dental assistants instruct them in postoperative care. They also teach patients about general oral health care, such as how to control plaque. In addition, they record exam and treatment information in patients' charts.

Some dental assistants have other duties that require more training. They take x-rays of patients' teeth and process the film. They remove stitches or apply numbing agents to patients' gums. In addition, they apply fluoride to patients' teeth to prevent cavities. Dentists may also train assistants to prepare teeth for the cavity filling process. Assistants also learn to remove excess cement after the process is done.

Dental assistants who have lab duties make casts of the teeth and mouth from impressions taken by dentists. They also may polish removable appliances, such as bridges, and make temporary crowns. Dental assistants with office duties schedule and confirm patient appointments. They keep records, send bills, and take payments. They also order dental supplies and materials.

Pathway:

Health Science