



A healthier mouth for a healthier you!

MORE CHOICE. BETTER ACCESS.

*New dental hygiene service delivery options enable Canadians to receive improved access to oral health services, including **direct access to a dental hygienist in their own practice.***

Dental hygienists: Your partners in oral and overall health



THE CANADIAN DENTAL HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

IMPROVING ACCESS WHILE DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY DENTAL HYGIENE SERVICES

Dental hygienists are primary health care providers whose education and training focus on the prevention of oral disease and the promotion of oral health. By working one-on-one with clients, dental hygienists provide the best service possible while establishing a relationship that may reduce anxiety and fear.

Over the past ten years the Canadian oral health care system has changed significantly. Today, most dental hygienists can establish their own private practice, that is, a practice outside of a dentist's office.

Dental hygienists can operate their own practice in a number of different provinces, including:

- Alberta
- Nova Scotia
- British Columbia
- Ontario
- Manitoba
- Saskatchewan

Other provinces and territories are also moving towards this option, recognizing the benefit of giving Canadians greater access to oral health care.

No matter how services are delivered, provincial dental hygiene regulators protect the public and ensure a high standard of conduct and level of skill.

IMPROVING COLLABORATION

Private practice increases the opportunity for professional collaboration between dental hygienists and other health care professionals. Today, dental hygienists work with physicians, nurses, denturists, dietitians, occupational therapists, speech language therapists and massage therapists.

Greater collaboration enhances both the effectiveness and efficiency of the practice. This is particularly important given the links between oral disease and heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and pre-term, low birth weight babies.

NEW WAYS TO DELIVER ORAL HEALTH CARE

Private practice enables dental hygienists to establish different practice settings, helping the public to obtain oral care services from the most appropriate professional, when and where they need it. For example, mobile practices bring dental hygiene services to remote communities and housebound clients, while storefront locations provide ease of access to Canadians at all stages of life, from infancy to senior adulthood.

Practice settings can take a variety of forms, including:

Office or retail—Providing services in a fixed location.

Corporate—Providing in-house services for employees.

Private home—Providing services to people who cannot travel or have no access to service providers.

Community health centre—Providing services in a multidisciplinary health setting.

Long term care or residential care facility—Providing services to seniors or individuals who are mentally or physically challenged.

Community centre—Providing services such as mouth guard clinics, oral health screening and education programs.

School or daycare—Providing oral health education.

No matter the setting, with greater access to care, Canadians will enjoy better oral and general health.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I VISIT A DENTAL HYGIENIST?

Dental hygienists provide comprehensive oral health care including assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation.

ASSESSMENT—Here, the dental hygienist gathers the client's health history and conducts a head, neck and oral examination to make an assessment and a detailed dental hygiene diagnosis. At this stage, the dental hygienist can detect tooth decay, damaged restorations (e.g., fillings and crowns) and chipped or worn tooth surfaces. An assessment of the soft tissues of the mouth provides information about the health of the tongue, lips, teeth and gums.

PLANNING—A collaboration with the client to develop goals and objectives for his or her oral health.

IMPLEMENTATION—This involves putting the oral health care plan into action. For example, the dental hygienist provides services such as scaling, placement of cavity prevention agents and pit and fissure sealants for children.

EVALUATION—The dental hygienist provides an ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided.

WHAT IF I REQUIRE ORAL HEALTH CARE THAT IS OUTSIDE THE DENTAL HYGIENIST'S AREA OF EXPERTISE?

A dental hygienist is trained to determine when a referral is necessary. When required, a referral may be made to another health professional, such as a dentist, denturist, dental specialist, speech therapist or physician.

CAN MY DENTAL HYGIENIST TAKE X-RAYS OR PRESCRIBE MEDICATION?

In Alberta, a dental hygienist can prescribe and review an x-ray for the purpose of making a dental hygiene diagnosis. In all other provinces and territories, a dentist prescribes the x-ray; the dental hygienist then captures the x-ray images and reviews them with the dentist. Dental hygienists in Alberta can also prescribe medication to treat dental hygiene related illnesses.

Over time, it is anticipated that dental hygienists in other provinces will be able to expand their services.