

EXPLORING: DENTISTRY

Overview

Dentists diagnose and treat problems with a patient's teeth, gums, and related parts of the mouth. They provide advice and instruction on taking care of teeth/gums and on diet choices that affect oral health.

Typical Duties

- ▶ Remove decay from teeth and fill cavities
- ▶ Repair cracked or fractured teeth, remove teeth, straighten teeth
- ▶ Place sealants or whitening agents on teeth
- ▶ Give anesthetics to keep patients from feeling pain during procedures
- ▶ Write prescriptions for antibiotics or other medications
- ▶ Examine x-rays of teeth, gums, the jaw, and nearby areas for problems
- ▶ Make models and measurements for dental appliances, such as dentures, to fit patients
- ▶ Teach patients about diet, flossing, use of fluoride, and other aspects of dental care

General Information

- In 2021, the median salary for Dentists: \$163,220 and employment is expected to grow 6% by 2031.
- Dentists in private practice are very team-focused and often employ and supervise dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental laboratory technicians, and administrative assistants.
- Most dentists are general practitioners and handle a variety of dental needs. Other dentists practice in one of twelve specialty areas: Dental Anesthesiology, Dental Public Health, Endodontists, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Oral and Maxillofacial Radiologists, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, Orthodontists, Pediatric Dentists, Periodontists, Prosthodontists, Oral Medicine and Orofacial Pain.

Education Programs

There are 71 U.S. and 10 Canadian dental schools which accept student applications for Doctor of Dental Medicine (D.M.D.) or Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.) programs, which are equivalent degrees. Programs typically take 4 years to complete. View a list of dental schools on the [ADEA website](#).

Admission Requirements: Knowledge & Strategies

Many Dental programs have multiple deadline dates or operate on a rolling admissions process. View a detailed timeline of preparing for the application process on the [American Dental Education Association's website](#) to adequately plan. Work with your faculty advisor to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution's individual website for specific requirements!

Note: Some schools may require additional coursework so be sure to check each program individually to ensure your courses fit requirements!

Typical prerequisites include:

- ▶ Two semesters of biology with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of general chemistry with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of organic chemistry with lab
- ▶ Two semesters of physics with lab
- ▶ Some dental schools require additional courses such as English composition, anatomy and physiology, microbiology and biochemistry

Prepare for and take the Dental Admission Test (DAT)

- ▶ It is recommended that you take the test at least one year before you want to go to dental school. Most of those who take the DAT do so after their third year of college. Learn more about the DAT on the [American Dental Association website](#). Content tested includes:
 - ▷ Natural sciences (biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry)
 - ▷ Perceptual ability (two- and three-dimensional problem solving)
 - ▷ Reading comprehension (dental and basic sciences)
 - ▷ Quantitative reasoning

Admissions is based on holistic review, involving factors beyond DAT scores and GPA such as:

- ▶ Exposure to dentistry and shadowing
- ▶ Research experience
- ▶ Leadership, employment, involvement

Additional Tips

- ▶ When you submit an application, remember you will do so through a centralized application form: [ADEA's Associated American Dental Schools Application Service \(AADSAS\)](#).
 - In 2018, the average dental applicant applied to 10 programs
 - Applicants who are Texas residents wishing to apply to dental schools in Texas will use the [Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service \(TMDSAS\)](#).
- ▶ Build relationships: create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember, such connections can open up opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply
- ▶ Plan financially: there is a cost associated with taking the DAT and applying to schools
 - Check out the [ADEA's Application Fee Assistance Program](#)
 - Many insights and additional support resources are available on the [ADEA Go Dental website](#)

Want more information?

Schedule an appointment through [Handshake](#) to meet with a career coach, learn more and create plans to meet your goals!