

OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE: Dental Hygienists

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Dental hygienists clean teeth, examine patients for signs of oral diseases such as gingivitis, take x-rays, and provide other preventative dental care. They remove tartar and plaque and apply sealants and fluorides to help protect teeth.¹ Educating patients on ways to improve and maintain good oral health is also an important part of this profession. Dental hygienists typically need an associate's degree in dental hygiene. Bachelor's degrees in dental hygiene are also available,

substances from the surfaces of the teeth and gingival margins could reduce or prevent tooth loss.² This kind of disease prevention was almost unheard of at a time when tooth extractions were frequent treatments for dental problems. Dr. Fones trained the first dental hygienist in the world in 1906. His results were very successful and in 1913 he opened the Fones School of Dental Hygiene in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he spread his philosophy of

Connecticut's dental hygienist's mean wage is 19 percent higher than the U.S. mean hourly wage of \$33.99 and mean annual salary of \$70,700.³

Proven research linking oral and general health will continue to fuel the demand for preventative dental services provided by dental hygienists. As the large baby-boom population ages and people keep more of their original teeth than previous generations did, the need to maintain and treat these teeth will continue to

Top Five Location Quotient States for Dental Hygienists

State	Employment	Location Quotient	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Connecticut	3,760	1.59	\$40.54	\$84,320
Michigan	8,960	1.57	\$28.75	\$59,810
Rhode Island	1,030	1.56	\$33.74	\$70,180
Oregon	3,570	1.52	\$38.26	\$79,570
Washington	5,850	1.45	\$43.53	\$90,540
U.S.	190,290	1.00	\$33.99	\$70,700

but are less common.¹ A bachelor's or master's degree is usually required for research, teaching, or clinical practice in public or school health programs. Every state requires dental hygienists to be licensed; requirements vary by state. Licensure requirements in most states include a degree from an accredited dental hygiene program and passing grades on written and practical examinations.¹

Connecticut is the birthplace of dental hygiene. Dr. Alfred Civialion Fones, a dentist in the early 1900's, was concerned about his patients losing their teeth due to dental disease.² He thought that the removal of plaque, calculus and sugared

teaching dental disease prevention.²

Employment of dental hygienists is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations. It's expected to grow 33 percent from 2012 to 2022.¹ The location quotient is the ratio of the area concentration of occupational employment to the national average concentration. This table shows that Connecticut has the highest location quotient in the nation at 1.59, meaning that Connecticut's population of dental hygienists is 59% higher than the national average. Connecticut is also among the top five paying states with a mean hourly wage of \$40.54 and mean annual salary of \$84,320.³

drive the demand for dental care.¹ Federal health legislation is expected to expand the number of patients who have access to health insurance, which is expected to also contribute to the increase in the demand for these important dental services.¹ ■

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition

² Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association Inc. (www.cdha-rdh.com)

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages, 2012