

Where do dental therapists and dental hygienists work?

Most **dental therapists** are employed by district health boards to work in school or community dental services. Some work in private practices.

Dental therapists work in hygienic, well-lit dental clinics at or near primary and intermediate schools. They may also work in mobile dental therapy units, moving around the country.

Dental hygienists may work full or part-time hours. They may work in a dental practice as part of a team or in their own treatment room. They may also work in hospitals and nursing homes.

Video link for dental therapist

<https://youtu.be/NVG2x-XfLWo>

Video link for dental hygienist

https://youtu.be/j2p_vMECc2Y

Personal Qualities

Dental therapists and hygienists need to have good dexterity and steady hands. They should be fit and healthy, with good eyesight (with or without glasses).

They need to be:

- patient
- tolerant
- composed
- cheerful
- confident
- good communicators
- friendly



Information collated by NZIRH
Where to go for more information:

www.dcnz.org.nz

www.careers.govt.nz

www.kiaorahauora.co.nz

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Dental Therapist and Dental Hygienist



Oral health professionals

Oral health affects everyone, every day. Good oral health allows you to speak, smile, kiss, taste and chew with confidence.

An oral health professional can be registered to practise as a **dental hygienist** or as a **dental therapist** or both. Both disciplines are skilled at promoting healthy lifestyles and have a strong awareness of the influences on health. They have skills in dental therapy, dental hygiene and health promotion. Both educate their clients on how to maintain clean and healthy teeth and gums.

Dental therapists treat diseases and conditions that affect the teeth and gums of children. Early detection of dental disease and preventive treatment is a key aspect of the work of a dental therapist, as well as restoration of form or function to a damaged tooth.

A **dental hygienist** may work closely with dentists in detecting and treating oral disease. They provide oral health education and work to prevent oral disease and promote healthy oral behaviours.

What do they do?

Dental therapists and **hygienists** may do some or all of the following:

- examine the mouth, gums and teeth
- preventative work, like cleaning and coating teeth
- educate patients on how to clean teeth and gums effectively
- inform the community on the benefits of oral health and hygiene
- keep records
- refer people for specialist treatment to a dentist
- take x-rays

Dental therapists may also:

- repair teeth
- extract teeth

Dental hygienists may also:

- whiten teeth



Training

To become a **dental therapist** or **dental hygienist** you need to complete a three year degree in Bachelor of Oral Health from The University of Otago (Dunedin) or a Bachelor of Health Science in Oral Health from AUT (Auckland).

The courses consist of time in theory and clinical training – initially on models, but later treating patients under supervision. AUT requires University Entrance, while to be considered for admission Otago's Oral Health programme an applicant must have attained a minimum of 14 credits in NCEA L3 biology or equivalent; and 10 credits in English at NCEA L2 (at least 5 credits in reading and 5 credits in writing) and provide a statement of interest and a curriculum vitae.

The subjects that will help you most with these degrees are English and biology.