



| NSW Department of Education

Dental Assistant

Dental assistants are a vital part of a dental team. They assist dentists, hygienists and therapists to provide the best possible dental care to patients.

What dental assistants do

Dental assistants increase the efficiency of dental offices by applying technical, administrative and people-focused skills to offer patients high quality oral care.

Most dental treatment procedures require the hands-on support of a dental assistant who works directly under the dentist's guidance. One of their jobs is to help patients feel comfortable. They settle patients and prepare them for their check-up, surgery or procedure.

They provide patients with instructions for appropriate oral hygiene strategies to maintain oral health e.g. tooth brushing, flossing, nutritional counselling and oral care following surgery or other dental treatment procedures, such as the placement of a restoration (filling).

Dental assistants support dentists with procedures such as fillings, crowns and extractions. They take and pour dental impressions, combat infection through equipment sterilisation and conduct x-rays.

Dental assistants may also perform administrative duties such as maintaining patient records, office management, scheduling appointments, and billing patients.

Dental assistants may be required to wear a uniform, safety glasses, surgical masks, protective clothing and gloves to protect themselves and patients from infectious diseases. They must also follow safety procedures to minimize risks associated with x-ray machines.

Will I get a job?

Numbers of jobs in this occupation are predicted to grow over 6% in the next five years, with around 21,900 jobs in Australia.

What will I earn?

Up to \$950 median full-time weekly salary (before tax, excluding super).

You'll like this job if...

You're empathetic and cooperative. You are organised, prepared and make meticulous records. You pay attention to detail. You stay focused during recurring tasks. You're customer-service focused. You're good at precise communication, with strong interpersonal skills. You use critical thinking, reasoning and logic to solve problems. You're comfortable complying to regulations.

A day in the life...

Work as a dental assistant may involve these tasks:

- receive and prepare patients
- prepare tray set-up for oral procedures
- help dentists by transferring instruments during procedures, such as fillings, crown preparations and tooth extractions
- provide better visibility for dentists by using suction and other equipment
- expose digital radiographs and film, and perform x-ray processing
- use suction devices and water sprays to perform routine maintenance on equipment
- sterilise and prevent cross-infection of equipment
- advise patients on dental health education and post-operative care and procedures
- maintain accurate patient treatment records
- schedule patient appointments
- work with patients on billing and payment
- manage infection and hazard control protocol
- identify and respond to medical and dental emergencies.

VET qualifications

The following government-subsidised qualification is available in NSW:

Certificate III in Dental Assisting (HLT35015)

- Up to 1 year full-time
- Available as a traineeship
- Graduates employed or in further study: 85.5%*

Certificate IV in Dental Assisting (HLT45015)

- Up to 2 years full-time
- Available as a traineeship
- Graduates employed or in further study: 92.7%*



To find out more regarding these related jobs, visit education.nsw.gov.au/job-guides.

Information sources

Income: Australian Government Department of Employment, Australian Jobs Report 2017, Occupation Matrix. ANZSCO ID: 2211. Earnings can vary greatly depending on the skills and experience of the worker, and the demands of the role. Career trend: Australian Government Department of Employment 2017 employment projections to May 2022. Graduate outcomes: National Centre for Vocational Education Research. *Approximately 6 months after they completed VET.

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Roles to look for

- Dental assistant
- Dental nurse
- Dental chairside assistant

Main employing industries

- Healthcare and social assistance

Other jobs you may like...

- Dental hygienist
- Dental therapist
- Dental technician
- Dental Prosthetist
- Oral Health Therapist
- Dentist