

# Dentist

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A qualified medical professional who specializes in the care of teeth, mouth and gums is a dentist. Dentists provide their communities with an important health service by improving the oral health and therefore the quality of life of all of their patients. These Healthcare professionals are generally considered to be socially cognizant and talented and therefore are very well respected.

Dentistry is promising to become one of the most exciting careers of tomorrow. The use of cutting edge technology; using laser and computer-assisted diagnosis will make it a most challenging and rewarding career. Latest research in this area is quite promising and shows the vastness of this field.

There are many compelling reasons to choose dentistry as a profession. Dentists are like doctors in every way except that their work hours are quite reasonable at 7 to 10 hours per day. This is a notable attraction towards this profession due to the fairly predictable life that a dentist can lead. Also, many dentists own their private practice and can afford to be their own bosses.

Some very popular specializations in the field of dentistry include:

- General Dentists
- Cosmetic Dentists
- Orthodontists

Other professions pertaining to dentistry include:

- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Nurse
- Dental Technician

According to a conservative estimate employment opportunity for dentists will grow by 16 percent in the next 8-10 years. This rate is higher than the average growth rate for all other occupations. As the baby-boomers grow old, the demand for dental services is expected to grow. Also, the elderly are expected to retain their teeth, more so than their ancestors, they will also require more dental care than in the past. Along with these and many other factors the younger generation will also need precautionary check ups and thus result in an increase in demand for dentists.

## Where to Start?

In order to practice in the United States, a dentist must have a license from the state or region in which they want to practice. The following course of studies is taken in order to gain that license.

- Doctor of Dental Surgery/ Doctor of Dental Medicine (DDS/DDM): These qualifications are considered equal although DDS is more common. It takes 4 years to complete this study at a dental school and the dentist then can be called a “doctor” at completion. Dental schools require at least 3 years of undergraduate education and “pre-dental” courses in Organic chemistry, English, Physics and Biology. A pass is also needed in a Dental Admission Test (DAT) in order to gain entry into a dental school.
- National Board Dental Examination (NBDE) Part I and II: These exams must be taken by all dentists while in the dental school. Their results are important for students in order to gain entry into a residency program.
- Licensing exams: If a dentist wants to get into practice then they must pass the licensing examinations of their relevant state or region. The prospective practitioner must also pass the states ethics and jurisprudence exam also before the license is granted.

## What about the salary?

Salaries for general dentists are quite high; according to U.S Census Bureau a dentist has an average income in the highest 5 percent of U.S family income. PayScale.com predicts that a self-employed dentist can earn up to \$200,000 per year. Although, earnings vary greatly according to years of experience, location, daily hours worked also.

With just a degree under his belt, a dentist can expect to earn up to \$100,000 initially. Another factor affecting the salary is specialization. Earning a specialization in this field can improve dentist salaries sometimes by as much as \$ 40,000.

Dentists working as employees are also paid other benefits by their employers including malpractice insurance among other things.

## Is there any growth in this field?

Believe it or not, the possibilities of growth in the field of dentistry are limitless. Private practice is not the last stop for a dentist. Excellent opportunities are available in teaching and research. This can provide the means to pursue a specific dental interest in greater detail. Career choices are also available in government agencies and industry. Many dentists teach part-time and supervise students in dental schools.

Dentists aspiring to become teachers or conduct full time research have to study advanced dental training for 2 to 5 additional years. These training programs are conducted in dental schools and hospitals.

### **Testimonials:**

“I became dentist 6 years ago and since receiving my degree I haven’t looked back. My salary increased at regular intervals and since I started my own practice it has gotten even better! But you can’t put a price on the satisfaction I get by helping people and relieving their pain! It has been a good ride so far!”-

**Dr Daniel K - Kansas City**

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