

Dentist

■ Job Description

A dentist is the primary care professional for the hard and soft tissues of the mouth and associated structures. The dentist provides preventative care (oral hygiene), diagnosis, treatment, and surgery, and directs the work of auxiliary personnel. Among the dentist's major concerns are the function of the jaws and other oral structures, and the patient's psychological response to his or her appearance. Dentists are skilled in the technical aspects of dentistry as well as in pain control and the management of anxiety.

■ Job Settings

Private practice, clinics, hospitals, research labs, dental schools, governmental agencies and industry

■ Projected Need

Nationally, employment of dentists is expected to grow more slowly than average through 2010. In Illinois, the number of jobs for dentists is expected to decline slightly. Demand for dental care via preventative services is expected to increase. However, an increased use of support personnel (such as hygienists and assistants) may eliminate the need for many new dentists. Many dentists are nearing retirement age. Their retirements will cause most of the job openings in the field. New dentists may have good job opportunities as long as the number of graduates from dental schools does not increase dramatically.

In Illinois, there were 5,780 people employed in this small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

According to the American Dental Association, earnings nationally averaged \$158,080 per year for those in private practice, in 1999. Dentists in specialty practices averaged about \$240,500 per year.

■ Related Careers

The occupations of physician, optometrist, veterinarian, podiatrist, and osteopath require a similar academic background for entrance into the professional programs.

■ Differences in Training

Admission to dental schools is limited and competitive. Schools look for a strong academic record, demonstrated qualities of good judgment and perseverance, a high degree of motivation, and high scores on the American Dental Association Dental Admissions Test. In Illinois the Doctor of Dental Surgery degree is offered at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Doctor of Dental Medicine degree is offered at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/login.asp>

[Advanced Dentistry and Oral Surgery Dentistry Orthodontics](#)

■ Credentials

A dentist must graduate from an accredited college of dentistry and pass a state board exam to practice.

■ Advanced Training

A Master of Science (MS) degree is available in the following areas: endodontics (diseases of the dental pulp), oral biology, oral pathology, oral diagnosis and radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics (supervision, guidance, and correction of proper alignment of teeth and jaws), pediatric dentistry, periodontics (dealing with the tissues which surround and support the teeth), and prosthodontics (dealing with fixed and removable substitutes for natural teeth). Such training is generally prerequisite to teaching, conducting research, and consulting.

■ Resources

American Dental Association
Commission on Dental Accreditation
211 E. Chicago Avenue

Phone: 312.440.2500
E-mail: mediarelations@ada.org
Chicago, IL 60611
<http://www.ada.org>
Select "Teachers & Students." Click on "Career Resources" in the left side bar.

Up to 25 \$2,500 scholarships are available from the ADA Foundation to dental students in their second year. Applicants must demonstrate financial need. The ADA Foundation also makes available up to 25 scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 to minority dental students.

Illinois State Dental Society
1010 South 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62704
Phone: 217.525.1406
E-mail: info@isds.org
<http://www.isds.org>
Select "For the Public" in the left side bar. Click on "Careers in Dentistry."