



College of
Dental Hygienists
of Ontario

Protecting your health and your smile

Career Map: Dental Hygienist

www.cdho.org

This document was developed in collaboration with the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO) and the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade and updated in December 2017. Requirements may have changed by the time you apply. Please visit the CDHO website at www.cdho.org before completing your application.

© Copyright in this Career Map is held by the Queen's Printer for Ontario and the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario © 2017. This Career Map may be used or reproduced by any third party for non-commercial, not-for-profit purposes, provided that no fee, payment or royalty of any kind be charged by the third party for any further use or reproduction of the Career Map by any person. Any proposed commercial or for-profit use or reproduction of this Career Map requires a written licence from the Queen's Printer for Ontario and the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario.

Access to the Dental Hygiene Profession in Ontario

Preamble

This Career Map is written for graduates of dental hygiene programs which have **not** been accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).

In Ontario, the practice of dental hygiene is regulated under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA) and the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991* (DHA). Dental hygienists must comply with the regulations made under the DHA as well as the bylaws and standards of the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO). Copies of relevant legislation, standards, and guidelines relating to the practice of dental hygiene are available on the CDHO website under the heading “**MY CDHO**”.

The practice of “dental hygiene” is defined in the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991* as: “... the assessment of teeth and adjacent tissues and treatment by preventive and therapeutic means and the provision of restorative and orthodontic procedures and services.”

The CDHO is responsible for regulating the practice of dental hygiene in the interest of the overall health and safety of the public. To practise dental hygiene in Ontario, a certificate of registration with the CDHO is required, otherwise the practice is considered illegal. Only CDHO registrants with the appropriate certificate of registration can legally use the term “dental hygienist”, or a variation or abbreviation of the term.

There are three categories of certificates of registration with CDHO:

- General** – applies to those dental hygienists who meet the basic registration requirements; all registrants are initially registered in the General category.
- Specialty** – applies to registrants who hold a General certificate of registration and who have completed a program in restorative dental hygiene that meets the requirements of the College.
- Inactive** – is usually held by registrants who are taking some time away from practice. A CDHO registrant with an Inactive certificate of registration cannot practise dental hygiene in Ontario.

There are over 13,500 registered dental hygienists in Ontario. Dental hygienists perform some or all of the following procedures in a variety of health care settings, including private practice, long-term care, public health, education, research, and administration:

- implement the dental hygiene process of care, which includes conducting an initial dental hygiene assessment, planning treatment, implementing the plan, and evaluating the treatment;
- consult with other health care providers on patient care;
- take dental impressions;
- instruct patients regarding oral hygiene procedures and disease prevention;
- clean teeth above and below the gums to prevent gum disease;
- remove stains and deposits from teeth to prevent tooth and root decay;
- apply fluoride and/or other therapeutic treatments;
- take and develop X-rays;
- may perform restorative and orthodontic procedures in collaboration with a dentist; and
- may work collaboratively with dental assistants, denturists, dental technicians, and/or dentists in their health care functions.

Dental hygienists work with dentists in a variety of practice settings such as private practice, long-term care, education, research, and administration. Dental hygienists may also work with the military, with public health departments, and with patients of all ages. However, certain procedures cannot begin without an order from a dentist.

Dental hygienists may be employed by one dentist, a group of dentists, or may work for more than one dentist or facility during their work week. In Ontario, if dental hygienists contract their services to a dentist, they are required to meet self-employment criteria set by the Canada Revenue Agency, likewise when owning businesses.

Dental hygiene and related occupations can be described differently from country to country, or even from region to region within Canada. Therefore, it is highly recommended that applicants contact individual regulatory bodies or licensing jurisdictions for registration requirements and description of scopes of practice.

Applicants Who Graduated in Dentistry

A non-exemptible requirement for registration as a dental hygienist in Ontario is that an applicant must have graduated from a recognized accredited dental hygiene program, or one considered substantially equivalent by the Registration Committee of the CDHO. In Ontario, dental hygiene is considered a separate and distinct health profession from dentistry. Work experience is not considered a substitute for training in a supervised educational setting. Therefore, unless an applicant has successfully completed a program of study in dental hygiene *in addition to* her/his degree in dentistry, it is unlikely that the applicant's course of study would be considered equivalent to a recognized accredited dental hygiene program.

The Registration Committee has, over the years, reviewed many courses of study from applicants who graduated in dentistry from Colleges/Universities in Bangladesh, China, Croatia, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Syria, United States of America, and Yugoslavia. Although the members of the Committee recognized that there was overlap between the programs, they noted that only rarely does a program of study in dentistry focus on the dental hygiene process of care. Most importantly, the Committee felt that the courses reviewed did not ensure competence in the controlled acts of scaling and root planing relative to the dental hygiene process of care. Therefore, these courses of study were not considered equivalent to a recognized accredited dental hygiene program and the applicants were not eligible to sit the CDHO's certificate of registration examinations.

For applicants who graduated in dentistry and who are interested in dental hygiene as an alternative, CDHO recommends they contact educational institutions offering accredited programs in dental hygiene. To access information on pursuing courses of study in dental hygiene in Ontario, please visit the CDHO website at www.cdho.org, or use the following link for [Dental Hygiene Programs](#).

Entry-to-Practice Requirements in Ontario

In accordance with Section 31(1) 1. of the Regulation Part VII – Registration of the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991*, applicants must have graduated from an accredited dental hygiene program, or from a program that the Registration Committee of the CDHO considers to be substantially equivalent to an accredited program. This requirement is non-exemptible.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, established in 1988 by the Canadian Dental Association, is an autonomous body responsible for accrediting dental, dental hygiene, and dental assisting education programs in Canada ([About CDAC](#)).

For graduates of dental hygiene programs in the USA, a reciprocal agreement permits programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association to be recognized by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada.

Equivalency Assessment Process

Step 1 — Assessing Academic Qualifications

Applicants must first have the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board (NDHCB) assess their course of study to determine if they are eligible to take the national written examination. The NDHCB can be contacted directly at:

[National Dental Hygiene Certification Board](#)

1929 Russell Road, Suite 322, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4G3

Telephone: 613-260-8156

Fax: 613-260-8511

E-mail: exam@ndhcb.ca

The fees and dates for the NDHCB exams are available on the NDHCB website under the [Exam Application](#) heading.

If eligible to take the national examination, the applicant is not required to have their course of study assessed again by the Registration Committee of the CDHO.

If not eligible to take the NDHCB examination, and the applicant wishes to proceed with an application to the CDHO, the application will be referred to the Registration Committee to determine if the course of study meets the educational requirements. In this case, the applicant must arrange for their College/University of graduation to send an original, detailed course description and other documentation directly to the CDHO. The course documents must relate to the applicant's years of study.

Once the complete application is received, it takes approximately three months for the Registration Committee to assess the course of study and come to a decision. For more information about the assessment process, visit the CDHO website at www.cdho.org.

The prior learning assessment fee for applicants from a non-accredited dental hygiene program is included on the [CDHO fee table](#) (see bottom of page 2).

Appeals

If the Registration Committee determines that the dental hygiene program the applicant completed is *not* equivalent to that of an accredited program, the applicant can request a review of the decision from the [Health Professions Appeal and Review Board \(HPARB\)](#).

Step 2 — Examinations

There are two kinds of examinations: a written certification exam and a clinical exam.

Written Certification Examination

This examination is administered by the NDHCB. For information on the National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination (NDHCE) fees click [here](#). The NDHCB provides a guide and sample questions to assist a candidate in preparing for the exam.

If a candidate is not considered eligible to sit the NDHCE, but the Registration Committee has determined that the applicant's course of study is equivalent, the applicant will be required to successfully complete a written examination as set or approved by the Committee.

Clinical Exam

Applicants who graduated from a non-accredited dental hygiene program are required to successfully complete the Canadian Performance Exam in Dental Hygiene (CPEDH). This clinical exam is held at least once a year.

Applicants are eligible to participate in the CPEDH if:

- they have already successfully completed the NDHCB written certification examination;
or
- their course of study has been approved by the Registration Committee and they have successfully completed the provincial written examination.

In accordance to the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991* (Ontario Regulations 218/94 – General – Part I, Examinations), if an applicant fails the clinical exam, the following guidelines apply:

- The applicant may retake the examination not more than two years after the failure, unless the applicant presents to the Registration Committee proof of remediation and upgrading approved by the Committee;
- If the applicant fails the third attempt, the applicant is no longer eligible to retake further examinations.

Step 3 — Registration

To obtain a general certificate of registration, please note the following additional registration requirements. Applicants must:

- Meet the requirement for Good Character;
- Be a Canadian citizen or the holder of permanent resident status in Canada, or be authorized under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) to engage in the practice of the profession (i.e. hold a valid temporary work permit);
- Be able to speak and write either English or French with reasonable fluency;
- Provide the College with a police record check that is dated no earlier than one (1) year before the date on which the completed application was submitted;
- Provide a certificate of professional conduct from every jurisdiction where the applicant holds a professional certificate of registration in any regulated profession;
- Successfully complete an approved clinical refresher course (or professional competency assessment, as set or approved by the Registration Committee), if the applicant graduated more than three years prior to the application and has not practised dental hygiene in a recognized jurisdiction within the three years;
- Provide proof of current professional liability insurance coverage that meets the requirements set out in [CDHO Bylaw No. 5](#) (Section 7.3);
- Pay the [applicable fees](#).

Application Process

Before Immigrating to Canada

The CDHO will accept and process an application for registration from an applicant from another country. All applications are treated in the same manner and must meet the requirements for registration in place when submitting their application.

When the Applicant Arrives in Ontario

Applicants may choose to wait until they have arrived in Ontario to begin the application to register with the CDHO.

Steps

- 1) The first step in the application process is the completion of the NDHCB exam and the Canadian Performance Exam in Dental Hygiene (for graduates of a non-accredited dental hygiene program).
- 2) After both the written and clinical exams have been passed, [set up an account on the CDHO website](#), pay the application fee, and complete the online jurisprudence module and exam.
- 3) After the jurisprudence exam is completed, access the application for registration from within the online account, complete the online application process, and then print the application documents.
- 4) Follow the Application Checklist to ensure that all required supporting documentation is included before submitting the application package to the CDHO office.

Application guides, frequently asked questions, and other information is available on the CDHO website under the heading "[Become a Dental Hygienist](#)" (please also see chart below).

The CDHO does not provide informal assessments. Only completed application packages are reviewed in order to determine whether the applicant meets the current registration requirements.

Application files are confidential. Release of information to a third party (i.e. employer, family member, agency) requires written authorization from the applicant.

The following chart highlights the documentation applicants need to submit when applying for a certificate of registration with the CDHO. Please note that, for documents submitted in languages other than English or French, the applicant must include official, certified translations (issued in Ontario or abroad).

Documents that need to be submitted when applying for a certificate of registration with the CDHO:		
Form	Title	Description
Form A	Application for Registration as a Dental Hygienist in Ontario (Non-Accredited dental hygiene programs)	Submit a completed and notarized form. Form A includes a section on professional liability insurance. Please note that all registrants holding a general certificate must have liability insurance that meets the requirements set out in CDHO Bylaw No. 5, Section 7.3.

Form	Title	Description
Form B	Certificate of Professional Conduct	<p>Applicants are required to submit this form directly to the regulatory body in every jurisdiction in which they have been registered as a dental hygienist or in any other regulated profession.</p> <p>Once the form is processed, the regulatory body must send it <i>directly to the CDHO by mail</i>. Form B cannot be submitted to CDHO by the applicant.</p> <p>This form must be current and submitted within the three (3) months before you register.</p>
Form C and Transcript	Certificate of Dean or Principal of College/ University Granting Diploma/Degree in Dental Hygiene	Submit this form to your College/University. A representative from your institution of graduation completes this form (section 2) and sends it directly to the CDHO by mail, along with an official transcript of your results.
Form D	Authorization to Release Information	This form authorizes the CDHO to verify or obtain additional information related to your application.

Additional supporting documentation required when applying for a certificate of registration:

Additional Documents Include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The original or a notarized copy of the Canadian Police Information Centre Criminal Record Report (CPIC report) that is dated no earlier than one year before the date on which your completed application is submitted. – A notarized copy of your Canadian birth certificate or current Canadian passport OR citizenship card OR permanent residency papers OR valid temporary work permit. A notarized copy of the documentation to support any changes to your name, if applicable. – Completed and signed Application Checklist. – Appropriate fee.
------------------------------	---

Language Proficiency Assessment

As per section 29. (4) 3. of the Regulation Part VII – Registration of the *Ontario Dental Hygiene Act, 1991*, an applicant “(...) must be able to effectively comprehend and communicate in either English or French, both orally and in writing.” Language proficiency is assessed informally through the applicant’s ability to successfully complete the written and clinical exams.

Occupational Training and Upgrading

If an applicant has not practised dental hygiene in a jurisdiction recognized by the CDHO within the three years before his/her application is received, the applicant must successfully complete an approved clinical refresher course or professional competency assessment. Applicants should contact the CDHO office for information on registering for a refresher course that is approved by the Registration Committee.

As for Continuing Education, the CDHO Quality Assurance Program provides guidelines for CDHO registrants. For more information, please visit the Quality Assurance Program section of the CDHO website, available under the heading “[My CDHO](#)”.

Labour Market Information

For information on the Labour Market in Ontario, applicants are recommended to visit the [Government of Canada Job Bank](#) website where they can access topics such as:

- Job Search in Ontario (can browse by “Dental Hygienists”);
- Explore careers by occupation, education program, wages, outlook, skills, and knowledge; and
- Job Market Trends in Ontario (and other provinces).

Fees and Timelines

- Please refer to the document “[Fees Related to Application and Registration](#)”, available on the CDHO website.
- CDHO accepts certified cheques, money orders, or credit cards (Visa and MasterCard, including Visa Debit and MasterCard Debit). Personal cheques and/or cash payments are not accepted. All amounts are payable to the CDHO in Canadian Dollars only.
- For applicants who are successful on the first attempt at the NDHCE and the CPEDH, the application process can take approximately 3 to 12 months, dependent on the available dates of the exams.
- The dates of the upcoming NDHCB examinations are posted on the NDHCB website and usually occur 3 times per year, while the clinical exam is held once a year.
- Once a completed application has been received by the CDHO, it takes approximately 10 business days to review and approve the application. Applicants are informed by email or by phone about any missing or incomplete information on their application form, which may result in longer processing time. A confirmation email is sent after the application is processed.

Additional Information

⇒ For more information on Registration requirements in Ontario, please contact:

CDHO – College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario

175 Bloor Street East, North Tower, Suite 601
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3R8
CANADA

Telephone: 416-961-6234

Toll Free: 1-800-268-2346 (Ontario only)

Fax: 416-961-6028

Web site: www.cdho.org

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

(Eastern Time – EST)

For email contacts and staff listing, please click on the tab “[Contact Us](#)” on the CDHO website.

⇒ For more information on Professional Associations, please contact:

CDHA – The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

1122 Wellington St W.
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 2Y7
CANADA

Telephone: 613-224-5515

Toll Free: 1-800-267-5235

Fax: 613-224-7283

E-mail: info@cdha.ca

Web site: www.cdha.ca

ODHA – Ontario Dental Hygienists’ Association

108–3425 Harvester Road
Burlington, Ontario L7N 3N1
CANADA

Telephone: 905-681-8883

Toll Free: 1-800-315-6342

Fax: 905-681-3922

E-mail: info@odha.on.ca

Web site: www.odha.on.ca

⇒ **For a list of educational institutions, in order to obtain more information on pursuing courses of study in dental hygiene (in Ontario),** please visit the [CDHO website](#) or see the [Dental Hygiene Programs](#) document.

⇒ **For more information on the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board (NDHCB), please contact:**

NDHCB — National Dental Hygiene Certification Board
1929 Russell Road, Suite 322
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4G3
CANADA

Telephone: 613-260-8156
Fax: 613-260-8511
E-mail: exam@ndhcb.ca
Web site: www.ndhcb.ca

⇒ **For information on where and how to get help with settlement in Ontario, visit www.settlement.org or contact:**

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
110 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario M4R 1A3
CANADA

Telephone: 416-322-4950
Fax: 416-322-8084
E-mail: ocasi@web.net
Web site: www.ocasi.org

⇒ **For information about accessing health-related professions in Ontario, please contact:**

HealthForceOntario – Access Centre for Internationally Educated Professionals

163 Queen Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5A 1S1
CANADA

Telephone: 416-862-2200 ext. 1
Toll Free: 1-800-596-4046 ext. 1
TTY: 416-862-4817

E-mail: accesscentre@healthforceontario.ca
Website: www.healthforceontario.ca