

Dental therapist

A dental therapist does some of the more straightforward work undertaken by a dentist.



Working life

More dental surgeries have dental therapists working for them to do routine dental work. As a therapist, you'll have independence without the full responsibility of running a practice. You can also provide treatment in other parts of the community, such as schools and care homes.

Health education would be an important part of your role such as offering advice to patients on looking after their oral health. You'll also carry out a range of procedures including:

- scaling and polishing
- applying materials to teeth such as fluoride and fissure sealants
- taking dental x-rays
- taking impressions of teeth
- undertaking routine dental fixes of baby and permanent teeth
- putting in crowns
- extracting teeth

Annette Matthews

Dental therapist and hygienist

My days vary, depending which practices I am working in. I have busy days which include back-to-back restorative dentistry and there are days when I focus on prevention and dental hygiene.

[Read Annette's story](#) ^[1]

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Dental therapists can also develop additional skills including:

- carrying out tooth whitening
- removing sutures after a dentist has checked the wound

You'll treat a range of patients with different treatment needs including those who:

Dental therapists may treat patients who have high treatment needs.

- are dentally anxious
- have learning or physical disabilities
- have high levels of untreated decay
- are unable to access regular dental care in the general dental service

Entry requirements

To practise as a dental therapist, you must obtain a diploma or degree in dental therapy and be registered with the [General Dental Council](#) [2].

You'll need five GCSE subjects at grade 4-7 or A to C, plus two A-levels or a recognised qualification in dental nursing. You may also be required to have some experience of dental nursing before taking the course.

Must have skills

You will patience and excellent communication and interpersonal skills. You'll need empathy and be caring approach along with proficient, highly technical clinical skills. You'll need to be confident to work on your own and be able to put even the youngest of patients at ease. Good time management and organisational skills are essential, along with attention to health and safety procedures. At all times, a dental therapist needs to be mindful of the need for patient confidentiality.

Training and development

The diploma in dental therapy course takes about 27 months, depending on the dental hospital at which you study. Some dental schools offer part time courses for dental hygienists wishing to qualify as dental therapists.

Subjects studied include:

- preventive dentistry
- dental health education
- dental pathology
- simple restorative procedures for both deciduous and permanent teeth
- the extraction of deciduous teeth (previously known as baby teeth)
- radiography and pharmacology

If you are studying dental therapy at level 5 or 6 you could be eligible to receive at least £5,000 a year towards your studies while at university. Your personal circumstances may mean you could receive more. And the good news? You'll never have to pay it back. [Find out more.](#) ^[3]

Career development

You'll be expected to keep up to date with the latest techniques and developments, including best practice. Your professional development will be identified through performance reviews and will be part of your mandatory requirements for General Dental Council register.

With experience, you can progress to become a practice manager or move into research. You could move into teaching roles or become an orthodontic therapist.

Pay and benefits

Dental therapists may be self-employed or employed directly by a dental practice so your working hours and pay will vary but some evening or weekend work may be required.

If you work for the the NHS in a hospital or community clinic, your starting salary might be at bands 5 or 6 of the [Agenda for Change](#) ^[4] pay scale. You'll typically work 37.5 hours a week.

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Dental Therapy and Dental Hygiene

Cardiff University

[View course](#) ^[5] Opens in a new window

◦ Qualification

Bachelor of Science (with Honours) - BSc (Hons)

Study mode

Full-time

Duration of the course

3 Years

Leading to a career in

- Dental hygiene or therapy
- Contact details
 - admissions@cardiff.ac.uk ^[6]
 - 029 2087 9999
- Region
 - Wales
- Admissions address
 - 30-36 Newport Road
 - Cardiff
 - CF24 0DE
 - United Kingdom

Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy

University of Portsmouth

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- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Science (with Honours) - BSc (Hons)
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 3 Years
- Leading to a career in
 - Dental hygiene or therapy
- Contact details
 - admissions@port.ac.uk ^[8]
 - 023 9284 5566
- Region
 - South East
- Admissions address
 - University House
 - Winston Churchill Avenue
 - Portsmouth
 - PO1 2UP
 - England

Oral Health Sciences (Top-Up)

University of Essex

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- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Science (with Honours) - BSc (Hons)
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 1 Year
- Leading to a career in

- Dental hygiene or therapy
- Contact details
 - admit@essex.ac.uk ^[10]
 - 01206 873666
- Region
 - East of England
- Admissions address
 - 10 Elmer Approach
 - Southend
 - SS1 1LW
 - England

Oral Health Science

University of Essex

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- Qualification
 - Foundation Degree in Science - FdSc
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 2 Years
- Leading to a career in
 - Dental hygiene or therapy
- Contact details
 - admit@essex.ac.uk ^[10]
 - 01206 873666
- Region
 - East of England
- Admissions address
 - University of Essex
 - Wivenhoe Park
 - Colchester
 - CO4 3SQ
 - England

Dental Hygiene

University of Portsmouth

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- Qualification
 - Bachelor of Science (with Honours) - BSc (Hons)
- Study mode
 - Full-time
- Duration of the course
 - 3 Years
- Leading to a career in

- Dental hygiene or therapy
- Contact details
 - admissions@port.ac.uk ^[8]
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- Region
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- [Dental technician/dental technologist](#) ^[17]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/dental-team/roles-dental-team/dental-therapist/real-life-story-annette-matthews> [2] <http://www.gdc-uk.org/Pages/default.aspx> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/financial-support-university> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates> [5] <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/2022/dental-therapy-and-hygiene-bsc> [6] [mailto: admissions@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@cardiff.ac.uk) [7] <https://www.port.ac.uk/study/courses/bsc-hons-dental-hygiene-and-dental-therapy> [8] [mailto: admissions@port.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@port.ac.uk) [9]

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