

What does a dentist do?

Dentists diagnose and treat problems with patients' teeth, gums, and related parts of the mouth. They provide advice and instruction on taking care of the teeth and gums and on diet choices that affect oral health. Dentists use a variety of equipment, including x-ray machines, drills, mouth mirrors, probes, forceps, brushes, and scalpels. They also use lasers, digital scanners, and other computer technologies. They employ and supervise dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental laboratory technicians and receptionists. Dentists also:

- ❖ Remove decay from teeth and fill cavities
- ❖ Repair cracked or fractured teeth and remove teeth
- ❖ Place sealants or whitening agents on teeth
- ❖ Administer anesthetics to keep patients from feeling pain during procedures
- ❖ Examine x rays in order to diagnose problems

Salary

Dentists with up to five years' experience usually earn \$65,000 to \$120,000 per year, while very experienced dentists usually earn \$150,000 to \$212,000 per year.

What subjects do I need to take at school?

- ❖ Maths
- ❖ Chemistry
- ❖ Physics
- ❖ Biology
- ❖ English

How do I get into it?

To become a dentist you need to:

- ✓ complete the Health Sciences First Year programme at Otago University
- ✓ complete a four-year Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree at Otago University.
- ✓ be registered with the Dental Council of New Zealand

The University of Otago is the only university in New Zealand that offers a Bachelor of Dental Surgery. To specialise in an area of dentistry, such as orthodontics, you need to complete postgraduate study at the University of Otago.

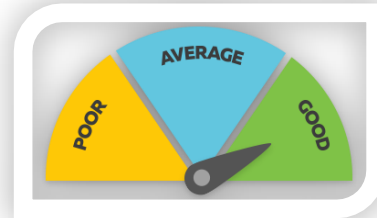
Interpersonal skills

Dentists also need to be able to:

- ❖ relate to a wide range of people
- ❖ be accurate with an eye for detail

- ❖ be able to work well under pressure
- ❖ be good at problem solving

- ❖ have good eyesight (with or without corrective lenses)
- ❖ have good hand-eye coordination



Will I get a job after training?

It can take time for graduate dentists to gain full-time employment. There are few entry-level positions available and 60-80 graduates annually. Many established private practices don't take on graduates full time. Graduate dentists working in private practices can find it hard to get new patients as they lack experience, especially as the cost of treatment is not subsidised. Once graduate dentists have gained 1-2 years' experience their employment chances increase.

Dentist appears on Immigration New Zealand's immediate skill shortage list. This means the Government is actively encouraging skilled dentists from overseas to work in New Zealand. Many regions throughout New Zealand have a shortage in dentists. Most dentists are self-employed, but some are employees by hospitals, community dental services, the Army, and the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Otago.

Dentists may specialise in an area of dentistry such as Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, Oral Medicine Specialist, Orthodontist, Paediatric Dentist, and Periodontics.

Where can I find out more?

- **University of Otago - Faculty of Dentistry**
(03) 479 7019 - dentistry@otago.ac.nz - www.otago.ac.nz
- **New Zealand Dental Association**
<https://www.nzda.org.nz/>