Thinking about being a Dentist?





A guide to careers in Dentistry and how to train



**There are three main professions in Dentistry:**

* **General Dentist**
* **Specialist in an area of Dentistry**
* **Dental Care Professional**

**General Dentist:**

If you like, this is the individual who does the “bread and butter” dentistry and who you will know well as your own dentist. They will offer a wide range of treatments to help maintain the long term health of teeth and to try and help patients prevent or manage dental disease. A Dentist has been to university to gain a degree in Dentistry (BDS or BChD).

The entry requirements for the dental degree is usually 3 A\*s. The degree takes 5 years to complete and involves theoretical and practical studies so they have an understanding of all aspects of dentistry. Once they complete their degree, most will go on to complete a 1 year “apprenticeship” under the supervision of a well experienced dentist, where they receive on-going training. After this period, most will go onto work as an Associate Dentist in another dentist’s practice. Some, however, may buy or set up a practice immediately. You can also be a dentist in the armed forces. All dentists must be registered with the General Dental Council every year in order to practice in the UK. They also have to continue learning and be able to show evidence that they have done this to the GDC to keep their place on the register.

The sort of things that a general dentist will do on a day to day basis would be: Check ups, fillings, extraction of teeth (pulling teeth out), cleaning and polishing teeth, and more complicated procedures such as root fillings, crowns and dentures.

The average Dentist will earn anything up to £250,000 **gross fees** but will have to pay a proportion of this to the principal of the practice or pay the overheads (paying materials, laboratories and staff wages), as they are self-employed they will have to pay tax on the net earnings. The average pay for an Associate Dentist is around £80,000 after deductions and before tax.

**SPECIALISTS IN DENTISTRY:**

Dentistry itself is made up of many different specialties, in most of which a dentist can gain further training and qualification. Once a recognised training pathway has been completed (usually 3 years plus passing an examination), that dentist is then allowed to register as a specialist with the General Dental Council on their specialist lists. The following areas of specialism are currently recognised:

**Special Care Dentistry:** This is concerned with the improvement of the oral health of individuals and groups in society who have a physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, medical, emotional or social impairment or disability or, more often, a combination of these factors. It pertains to adolescents and adults.

**Oral Surgery:** This deals with the treatment and ongoing management of irregularities and pathology of the jaw and mouth that require surgical intervention. This includes the specialty previously called Surgical Dentistry.

Some applicants are also specialists in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, and have a qualification in Medicine as well as Dentistry. They will have a greater scope of practice, including surgical management of Cancer of the head and neck, correction of dentofacial abnormalities including the management of cleft palate, trauma and cosmetic facial surgery techniques

**Orthodontics:** This is the development, prevention, and correction of irregularities of the teeth, bite and jaw using braces.

**Paediatric dentistry:** This is concerned with comprehensive therapeutic oral health care for children from birth through adolescence, including care for those who demonstrate intellectual, medical, physical, psychological and/or emotional problems.

**Endodontics:** This is concerned with the cause, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases and injuries of the tooth root, dental pulp, and surrounding tissue.

**Periodontics:** The diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases and disorders (infections and inflammatory) of the gums and other structures around the teeth

**Prosthodontics:** The replacement of missing teeth and the associated soft and hard tissues by prostheses (crowns, bridges, dentures) which may be fixed or removable, or may be supported and retained by implants.

**Restorative dentistry:** This deals with the restoration of diseased, injured, or abnormal teeth to normal function.  
Includes all aspects of Endodontics, Periodontics and Prosthodontics.

**Oral Medicine:** Concerned with the oral health care of patients with chronic recurrent and medically related disorders of the mouth and with their diagnosis and non-surgical management.

Other areas of specialism are recognised but are usually non clinical.

Specialists can either work in Hospital practice, Specialist Practice or as a visiting specialist to a regular Dental Practice and salaries are varied depending on the fees they charge. In comparison to an average dentist, you can expect them to be higher that earned by a regular dentist due to the additional skills and experience they command.

**Dental Care Professionals**

These include Dental Nurses, Dental Technicians, Clinical Dental Technicians, Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists and Orthodontic Therapists

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