

Dental Therapists and Hygienists

Dental therapists and hygienists are Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) specially trained to work alongside the dental surgeon in providing care for patients. They have recognised formal qualifications and are registered with the General Dental Council.



The hygienist's main role is to professionally clean the teeth for the patient. This is usually called scaling and polishing and root planing. Perhaps their most important role is showing the patient the best way to keep their teeth free of plaque. They also give invaluable advice on diet and preventing dental decay.

Dental Therapists have extended duties and can perform some preventive and restorative treatments on prescription from the dental surgeon such as small fillings and fissure sealants.

Will visiting the hygienist prevent dental disease?

Hygienist and therapy services are all about prevention. Removing the calculus (tartar) that builds up on teeth and teaching you how to prevent it reforming by showing you how to look after your oral health, will go a long way to slowing down and preventing the effects of gum disease. Gum disease eventually leads to bone loss, infection and mobility and loss of one or more teeth.

Dietary advice and preventive treatments on teeth will slow down the rate at which teeth decay and so will reduce the need for restorative treatments such as fillings.



Children can be taught how to clean their teeth

Children can have their teeth polished and sometimes they can be treated with special fluoride gels if the dental surgeon feels it is appropriate.

Children in particular can benefit from having their permanent back teeth coated with a special plastic. This is usually referred to as “fissure sealants” (more information is available in our leaflet “Fissure Sealants”).

Do hygienists treat children?

Children can be taught how to clean their teeth. Mothers can be given tips on how to help younger children to do this properly.

Why doesn't the dentist clean my teeth anymore?

Some dentists still do scaling and polishing. However, many recognise that therapists and hygienists have been specially trained in this area and can usually spend longer with the patient doing this. They are also very good at teaching oral hygiene techniques such as what to use to clean between your teeth.

Is the treatment expensive?

Treatment prices vary on the amount and type of hygienist treatment that you need. Always ensure that you receive a written treatment plan, which includes treatment costs, before you begin treatment. The cost of preventive hygiene treatment is significantly less than the cost of most restorative treatments and should go a long way in reducing the need for these in the future. This all encourages good oral health and decreases dental costs.