



## FAQ for Foreign Trained Dental Hygienists

A license is required in order to practice as a dental hygienist in the United States (U.S.). To obtain a license, you must be a graduate of an accredited U.S. dental hygiene program, take and pass the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination and a state or regional clinical licensure exam. Specifically, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Graduate from a dental hygiene education program accredited by the American Dental Association (ADA) Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).
- Successful completion of the written National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) administered by the American Dental Association Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE).
- Successful completion of the Clinical State or Regional Board Examination.
- Upon completion of the above items, one must then apply for licensure in the state where he/she wishes to practice and successfully complete a state jurisprudence examination.

Dental hygienists and dentists who have not graduated from an ADA CODA accredited program may not take the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) without first submitting evidence to the JCNDE that the program attended is equivalent to an accredited program.

- Canadian Programs  
By reciprocal agreement, programs that are accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) are recognized by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association (ADA). However, individuals attending dental programs in one country and planning to practice in another country should carefully investigate the requirements of the licensing jurisdiction where they wish to practice. For additional information, please visit the Canadian Dental Association website at <http://www.cda-adc.ca/cdacweb/en/>.
- International Dentists/Dental Hygienists  
All graduates of non-accredited programs (dental or dental hygiene schools not accredited by the ADA Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) or the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) must have their official dental/dental hygiene school transcripts evaluated by the Educational Credential Evaluators ([www.ece.org](http://www.ece.org)), and must meet all other eligibility requirements to take the NBDHE. Please refer to the [NBDHE Guide](#) for specific information.

Should you decide to study dental hygiene in the United States, you should begin to think about the type of degree you wish to earn and the type of dental hygiene program to attend. A listing of all accredited dental hygiene programs in the United States can be found [here](#) .

Dental hygiene programs can be between 2-4 years in length and are located in Universities, Community Colleges and Technical schools. Graduates of accredited dental hygiene programs may be awarded a certificate, associate or baccalaureate degree.

Community colleges may require that you be a resident of the district in which the school is located in order to be eligible to enroll.

The state universities that offer dental hygiene programs will often have a state residency requirement. For students who enroll who are from out-of-state, the tuition is usually higher.

Colleges and Universities that accept students from outside the United States require a Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL test. TOEFL requirements will also vary from school to school. There are also private schools that offer dental hygiene as a major course of study. These usually do not have residency requirements; however, you should check with each school to inquire about its admissions policy.

All dental hygiene programs will require some type of prerequisites, typically courses with an emphasis on science such as chemistry or biology in addition to other college level courses. Any courses taken outside of the U.S., such as those taken in your professional course of study; will probably need to be evaluated by a transcript service to ensure that they are compatible with courses offered here. The dental hygiene programs will then decide whether these previous courses may be accepted toward the degree offered at their school.

For specific information about applying for licensure in the state where one wishes to work, contact the appropriate licensing authority for information about application procedures and requirements. A listing of these state licensing authorities can be found in the [Licensure](#) section of our website under “*Learn More*”.

For specific information about the [regional or state clinical examinations](#) contact the appropriate examining agency for information about eligibility requirements and the application process.

The Dental Hygiene National Board Examination (NBDHE) is administered by the American Dental Association (ADA). For additional information regarding the NBDHE, contact the Joint Commission on Dental Examinations.

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