

Dental Assistant

The dentist's second pair of hands. One year of college, a national exam, and a job in any town with a dental clinic.

TYPICAL PAY

\$56,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$44k to \$73k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Dental clinics, orthodontic offices,
public health units, dental schools**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Grade 12 English, plus biology and chemistry at most colleges.
- 2 Dental assisting certificate** 8 to 12 months
 8 to 12 months at a college. Chairside assisting, X-rays, instrument sterilization, taking impressions, and a clinic placement. Look for a program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada.
- 3 NDAEB (National Dental Assisting Examining Board) exam** After graduation
 One national written exam. Nine provinces require it for new graduates. Graduates of non-accredited programs also do a hands-on clinical evaluation.
- 4 Register or certify in your province** A few weeks
 A regulatory college in most provinces. In Ontario, the Ontario Dental Assistants Association certifies Level II assistants instead.

Pros and cons

- + One year of school and low tuition
- + Daytime hours, no nights or on-call
- + Jobs in every community with a dentist
- Modest pay that flattens early
- On your feet, bending over patients all day
- Often no pension and thin benefits in private clinics

Good to know

More than 25,000 of them

The Canadian Dental Assistants Association represents more than 25,000 dental assistants across the country. It is one of the largest groups of workers in dentistry, and it is overwhelmingly female.

One exam for nine provinces

The national dental assisting exam has been run by an independent board since 1997. Every province except Quebec requires it for new graduates, which makes it one of the easiest health credentials to ca...

Optional boosts

Orthodontic or oral surgery assisting. Treatment coordinator. Dental hygiene. Dental sales and training.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Dental assistants, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 National Dental Assisting Examining Board
 National Dental Assisting Examining Board: fees
 Durham College: Dental Assisting (Levels I and II)

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/dental-assistant>



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