

Periodontist

The gum and dental implant specialist. Three extra years after dental school, and most of the work is surgery.

TYPICAL PAY

\$227,690

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$107k to \$239k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

11 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Private periodontal practices, group dental offices, dental schoo...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology, chemistry and physics, plus anything that builds hand skill. Dexterity matters and admissions know it.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major, as long as you finish the pre-dental science courses and sit the Dental Admission Test (DAT).
- 3 Dental school** 4 years
 Four years ending in a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD). The two degrees are equivalent and which you get depends on the school.
- 4 Periodontics residency** 3 years
 Three additional years beyond dental school, accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, covering gum surgery, bone grafting, implant placement and sedation.
- 5 License and board certification** After residency
 A state dental license is required to practice. Board certification through the specialty's national board is voluntary and involves written and oral examinations.

Pros and cons

- + Specialist income with mostly predictable daytime hours
- + Real surgery without the hours of a hospital specialty
- + Patients are referred to you, so the practice fills itself
- Eleven years of training and often \$300,000 or more of debt
- General dentists now place implants too, which squeezes referrals
- Physically punishing on your neck, back and hands over a career

Optional boosts

Board certification. Sedation training. Full arch implant cases. Digital planning and guided surgery.

Good to know

Three extra years, and they are surgical

The American Academy of Periodontology describes periodontists as completing three additional years of education beyond dental school, most of it surgical training that general dentists never receive.

Gum disease is usually silent

Symptoms often do not show up until the advanced stages, which is why people are referred to a periodontist after bone has already been lost rather than before.

Where these numbers come from

O*NET OnLine: Dentists, All Other Specialists (29-1029.00)
 American Academy of Periodontology: what is a periodontist
 Commission on Dental Accreditation
 American Dental Education Association

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/periodontist>



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