



PRE-DENTIST ADVISING GUIDE

Is the dentistry profession right for you?

If you have a concern for public health and disease prevention, enjoy the natural sciences and scientific investigation, and want the freedom to work independently or with a group of colleagues, then DDS may be a good fit.

Advances in dental research, including genetic engineering, the discovery of links between oral and systemic diseases, the development of salivary diagnostics, and the continued development of new materials and techniques, make dentistry an exciting, challenging, and rewarding profession.

What does a dentist typically do?

A dentist is a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DDM) dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of oral disease and conditions with a specialty in one of twelve areas. Duties include:

- Evaluate the overall, systemic health of their patients while advising them about oral health and disease prevention.
- Perform clinical procedures, such as exams, fillings, crowns, implants, extractions, and corrective surgeries.
- Identify, diagnose, and treat oral condition, and problems with teeth, gums, and related parts of the mouth.
- Perform general dentistry or a dental specialty: Dental Anesthesiology, Dental Public health, Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial (O&M) Radiology, O&M Surgery, Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Periodontics, Pediatric Dentistry, Prosthodontics, Oral Medicine, and Oral Pain.

Where do dentists work?

Dental specialty and work preferences influence a dentist's work location as some dentists have their own business and work alone or with a small staff, while others have partners in their practice or work as associate dentists for established dental practices.

What is the difference between a Dentist and a Dental Hygienist?

- **Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)** and **Doctor of Dental Medicine (DDM)** are synonymous credentials for a physician graduating from an ADA-accredited dental school. They examine, diagnose, and treat diseases, injuries, and malformations of teeth and gums. There are many [specialties in Dentistry](#).
- **Dental Hygienists** Dental Hygienists are state licensed dental professionals with an associate or bachelor's degree from a CODA accredited DEH program. A major component of their scope of practice is non-surgical treatment of periodontal (gum) disease, dental sealants, fluoride treatments, as well as routine cleanings and patient exams for oral preventative care. In Colorado, they can practice independently or in public health clinics, health departments, and schools. In addition, in Colorado dental hygienists can own their own practice. Occupational Outlook Handbook: [Dental Hygiene](#).

BECOMING A DENTIST

Job Outlook

Median wages	\$79.95 hourly, \$166,300 annually
Employment (2023)	136,700 employees
Projected growth	Average (2% to 4%)
Projected job openings (2022-2023)	4,500
Occupational Outlook Handbook	Dentist



Colorado Programs

Dentists obtain a license specific to their state after graduating from a CODA-accredited dental program. DDS/DDM program completion and licensure requirements are state specific however across the industry include a committee review and passing written and clinical exams (Integrated National Board Dental Examination) before seeking residency in an area of specialty. There is only one predoctoral (DDS/DMD) dental education program in the state of Colorado.

Link to Program:

[CU Anschutz School of Dental Medicine](#) | [CU Anschutz Doctor of Dental Surgery](#) (DDS)
[CU Denver BA/BS-DDS Pathway Program with CU School of Dental Medicine](#)

Program Requirements

Pre-dental students should consult with individual institutions about the program requirements. Most do not require a bachelor's degree nor licensure in dental assistant or dental hygiene, but entry requirements consist of lower- and upper-level division coursework and a minimum of 50+ dental shadowing hours. Other requirements include: minimum of a C in the prerequisite coursework, completion of the [Dental Admissions TEST](#) (DAT), interview, and letters of recommendation. To enter dental school, students apply by submitting a single application through the [ADEA Associated American Dental Schools Application Service](#) (ADEA AADSAS); most students apply two to three times before admitted. The program at CU has a holistic admissions process. As a [service-learning program](#), they desire a well-rounded student who demonstrates strong academic performance, leadership and civic engagement, with courses inclusive of the social sciences, and volunteer service focusing on the sciences and public health. The ADEA AADSAS Application [Help Center](#) is a great resource at the time of applying for dental school; CU suggests applicants meet with their admissions office for an application review before applying.

Degree Planning: Course selection needs to include DAT exam content and the prerequisites requiring a lab must be in person, not CLEP or online. While there is not a “best major,” common undergraduate degree designations include Public or Allied Health, Healthcare Science, and/or social and natural sciences with a premedical or predental professional emphasis. A great starting place for degree planning is the Course Catalog for [CU School of Dentistry](#) and for career exploration, the [ADEA GoDental](#).

Common DDS Program Prerequisites:

English Composition	General Chemistry w/Lab	Physics I & II w/Lab
General Biochemistry	Microbiology w/Lab	
General Biology or Zoology w/Lab	Organic Chemistry w/Lab	

Common Electives:

Anatomy	Ethics	Pharmacology
Business management/finance	Histology	Physiology
Cell Biology	Immunology	Psychology
Communication	Nutrition	

Additional Resources

[Commission on Dental Accreditation](#) (CODA) | [CODA-Certified Program Search](#) | [American Dental Association](#)
[American Dental Education Association](#) (ADEA) | [ADEA Scholarships](#)
[Academy of General Dentistry](#) | [American College of Dentists](#) | [American Student Dental Association](#)
 O*NET Online Summary: [Dentists, General](#)