

# Considering a career as a dentist?

## Learn more about one of the most respected professions in the country

**D**id you know that dentistry is seen as one of the 10 most trusted and ethical professions in America? Dentistry offers many rewarding career options that combine science and technology with helping people enhance and maintain their oral health.

### WHAT DOES A DENTIST DO?

Dentists diagnose and treat diseases, injuries and malformations of the teeth and mouth. They improve a patient's appearance by using a variety of cosmetic dental procedures. They perform surgical procedures such as implants, tissue grafts and extractions. And they educate patients on how better to care for their teeth and prevent oral disease. Dentists also teach future dentists and dental hygienists, and they perform research directed toward improving oral health and developing new treatment methods.

### WHAT CAREER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN DENTISTRY?

More than 80 percent of dentists are general practitioners. About 20 percent are dental specialists who limit their practices to one of the nine recognized dental specialty areas: public health dentistry, endodontics, oral and maxillofacial pathology, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics and prosthodontics.

Teaching, dental research and dental industry are additional rewarding career options for both general practitioners and dental specialists.

Dentists also work in public health agencies, hospitals, the military and other settings.

### HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN DENTISTRY?

While in high school, get a broad exposure to math and science, and enroll in college-preparatory courses such as chemistry, biology and algebra. Liberal arts courses are helpful as well.

General biology, organic and inorganic chemistry, biochemistry and physics are recommended courses to take in college. Majoring in science is not a must, but completion of the pre dental science requirements is necessary.

A college undergraduate degree is recommended in preparation for dental school. Most dental students have completed four years of college.

Contact several dental schools and find out about each school's specific admission requirements. A counselor or adviser who is knowledgeable about the health professions can assist you with dentistry career information. Ask about the kind of courses you should be taking and request other admission information. Many science or pre dental clubs are available to offer additional information on dental careers.

### WHAT ARE THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DENTISTRY?

The outlook is favorable for new dentists, and exceptional career opportunities exist for minority students. Large numbers of dentists are projected to retire in the next 20 years, and new dentists will be needed in private practice, as teachers and researchers and in public health dentistry. Increasing numbers of older adults are keeping their teeth longer and, as a result, there is an increased demand for cosmetic services such as bonding and whitening.

Advancements in dental technology such as digital radiography, laser systems and informatics will allow dentists to provide more effective treatments. New information about the relationship of oral health to general health makes dentistry an important health profession for the future.

If this sounds interesting to you, you can get more information on dental careers by visiting the American Dental Association's Web site ("www.ada.org"), by calling 1-312-440-2390 or by e-mailing Beverly Skoog, coordinator of career guidance, ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, at "skoogb@ada.org". For a direct link to dental career resources, visit "www.ada.org/public/education/careers/index.asp". ■

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