

What is an oral health therapist?

Oral health therapists are dental professionals who are dual qualified in dental therapy and dental hygiene. Oral health therapists provide a wide range of dental care in a variety of settings to children, adolescents and adults.

Oral health therapists work as a member of a dental team. They provide dental therapy services to children and adolescents and dental hygiene services to people of all ages. Oral health therapists can also work in health promotion, education, research, management and policy development roles.

Is this you?

- able to establish rapport with patients
- good communication skills
- good hand-eye coordination
- able to do precise and detailed work
- able to work as part of a team.

'Working in the dental van, my work is literally always on the move. This job has given me opportunities to work and travel all over Queensland, and I enjoy meeting new patients every day. Work can be challenging and rewarding; from the day-to-day management of a mobile dental facility to the personal satisfaction of patient care.'

Leanne Shannon, oral health therapist

What does an oral health therapist do?

Oral health therapists can provide the following dental therapy services to children and adolescents:

- conduct dental examinations and diagnosis, and develop care plans
- take x-rays of teeth and jaws
- prepare cavities and restore teeth with fillings
- extract deciduous teeth under local anaesthetic when required
- conduct dietary counselling and oral health education and promotion.

Oral health therapists also provide dental hygiene services for people of all ages. Dental hygiene services include the use of preventative, educational and therapeutic methods for controlling oral diseases.

Where can oral health therapists work in Queensland Health?

Queensland Health Oral Health Services offer differing work environments including mobile dental vans and school, community and hospital clinics. Oral health therapists generally work in a particular geographical area and are responsible for visiting a number of local schools, as well as provide hygienist services in adult dental clinics.

Queensland Health encourages contemporary minimally invasive dentistry with a strong focus on prevention. The majority of your time will be spent in a clinical setting with patients, however, opportunities

are available to become involved in oral health education and promotion initiatives. Ongoing learning and professional development are important to the organisation and development programs, in-service training and participation in research projects are actively encouraged.

How do you become an oral health therapist?

To become an oral health therapist you will need to complete a Bachelor level course at university. Courses provide training in dental therapy, dental hygiene and health promotion. Entry into the courses below normally requires a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Prerequisite subjects, or assumed knowledge, in one or more of English, mathematics B, biological science, chemistry and physics are also normally required. Contact the universities you are interested in for more information as requirements may change.

Degree courses

Central Queensland University – Rockhampton, Queensland

- Bachelor of Oral Health, 3 years full-time

University of Queensland – Brisbane, Queensland

- Bachelor of Oral Health, 3 years full time

Registration

Oral health therapists must be registered with the Dental Board of Australia.

Interested in other oral health careers?

Visit the Queensland Health website www.health.qld.gov.au and search for Dental to find more career factsheets:

- Dental technician
- Dentist
- Dental assistant
- Dental prosthetist.

Where can I find out more info?

Central Queensland University

- Phone: 13CQUNI 13 27 86
- Website: www.cqu.edu.au/degrees

University of Queensland

- Phone: (07) 3365 8071
- Website: www.uq.edu.au/dentistry

The QTAC website has a list of universities and tertiary institutions with links to universities and courses offered. Go to www.qtac.edu.au and select Institutions.

To find out more about the exciting career opportunities in Queensland Health visit www.health.qld.gov.au.