

Dentists: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



Contents

1. Dentists: Alternative Careers	2
2. Employment Outlook	8
3. Retraining	10
4. Searching for Jobs.....	11
5. Volunteering in the Field	12
6. Helpful Resources	12

1. Dentists: Alternative Careers

You may find that your international training and experience as a dentist are not immediately accepted in B.C. The skills you have acquired as a dentist (detail oriented, fine motor coordination, finger dexterity, creativity, good communication skills) can be used in these alternative careers:

- Dental Assistant
- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Technician, Dental Laboratory Assistant
- Technical Sales Specialist

Alternative Careers

Dental Assistant [NOC 2021: 33100/ NOC 2016: 3411]

Also look for these job titles: dental aide, dental clinical assistant, preventative dental assistant, licensed dental assistant, registered dental assistant, certified dental assistant.

You help dentists during the examination and treatment of patients and may do clerical functions.

Duties include:

- prepare patients for dental examinations and help the dentist during the examination
- sterilize and maintain instruments and equipment

- prepare dental instruments and filling materials
- schedule patient appointments and record dental procedures performed
- invoice patients for dental services
- take and develop X-rays
- take preliminary impressions for diagnostic casts
- make temporary crowns and restorations
- place and remove dental dams
- do teeth whitening

Requirements:

In B.C., there are two types of dental assistants – Level I and Level II.

Level I dental assistants:

- do not need to be certified and do extra-oral and office duties only
- are generally required to have a secondary school diploma and complete on-the-job training

Level II - Certified dental assistants:

- licensed to perform intra-oral duties, such as polishing teeth, applying fluoride and sealant and taking preliminary impressions
- must be certified by the BC College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP) (<https://oralhealthbc.ca/register-renew/registrant-classifications/certified-dental-assistant/>). This includes completing an approved certified dental assisting program and completing the National Dental Assisting Examining Board Exam
- if you are an ***internationally-trained*** dental healthcare professional with National Dental Assisting Examining Board (NDAEB) certification, you may be eligible for CDSBC certification pending an assessment of your credentials (<https://oralhealthbc.ca/register-renew/registration-renewal-cda/cda-registration-info/>)

Skills:

- must have an approachable, relaxed and trustworthy manner
- should have strong communication and interpersonal skills in order to explain procedures to patients and make them feel comfortable

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- should have well-developed fine motor skills to manipulate devices such as rubber dams and X-ray film

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$24.50

<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search Dental Assistants]

Dental Hygienists [NOC 2021: 32111 / NOC 2016: 3222]

Also look for these job titles: dental therapist, dental nurse, registered dental hygienist

You work on treating and preventing diseases and disorders of the teeth and mouth.

Duties include:

- doing initial dental assessments and talking to patients about their dental care needs
- taking dental impressions
- cleaning the gums and teeth to prevent decay and disease
- applying fluoride treatment
- taking and developing X-rays
- may perform restorative and orthodontic procedures under the direction of a dentist

Requirements

- completion of an accredited two-year diploma or bachelor-level degree program in dental hygiene
- registration with the BC College of Oral Health Professionals is required order to practise
(<https://oralhealthbc.ca/register-renew/registant-classifications/hygienist/>)
- **internationally trained** dental hygienists must successfully complete the Canadian Performance Exam in Dental Hygiene (CPEDH) offered by the Federation of Dental Hygiene Regulators of Canada (FDHRC).
(<https://oralhealthbc.ca/register-renew/dh-registration-renewal/registration-resources-dh/>)

Skills

- should have strong communication and interpersonal skills to assess patient needs, explain procedures and put patients at ease
- well organized, detail-oriented and have the ability to solve problems and make decisions
- should have a strong back, good eyesight and a high degree of manual dexterity
- should enjoy working with people and as part of a team

Wages

- median hourly wage: \$44.10

<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search Dental Hygienists]

Dental Technologists, Technicians and Laboratory Assistants [NOC 2021: 32112 & 33100 / NOC 2016: 3223]

Also look for these job titles: dental technician assistant, denture finisher, ceramic denture moulder, dental ceramist, orthodontic band maker, Registered Dental Technician (RDT) or Certified Dental Technician (CDT)

Dental technologist and technician: design and make dentures and dental devices as prescribed by dentists and other specialists

Dental laboratory assistant: assist dental technologists and technicians in preparing and making dentures and other dental devices

Duties include:

- *Dental technologist and technician:* design, make or repair dental devices (including dentures, crowns, bridges, inlays, etc)
- *Dental laboratory assistant:* prepare plaster models and moulds from dental impressions, prepare wax bite-blocks and impression trays, cast gold or metal alloys for bridges and denture bases, make metal orthodontic bands

Requirements:

- *Dental Technician*: graduation from a Dental Technician Education Program approved by the BC College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP)

OR

at least 5 years' experience as a dental technician AND the combination of knowledge, skills and abilities, which, in the opinion of the Registration Committee, satisfy the education requirements

(<https://oralhealthbc.ca/register-renew/registrant-classifications/dental-technician/>)

- *Dental Laboratory Assistant (also called dental technician assistant)*: must work under the supervision of a registered dental technician;
- have graduated from Grade 12 or equivalent

Skills:

- potential to develop skill with small hand instruments
- an interest in doing precision work
- excellent hand-eye coordination
- an ability to focus on small details
- creative artistic inclinations
- good colour perception

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$25.00

<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search Dental Technologists]

Technical Sales Specialist [NOC 2021: 62100/ NOC 2016: 6221]

Also look for these job titles: dental sales specialist, sales support specialist

You sell a range of technical goods and services, such as scientific and industrial products, to governments and businesses in Canada and abroad.

Duties include:

- promote sales to existing clients
- locate potential new clients
- assess clients' needs and recommend the appropriate goods or services
- provide input into product design where goods or services must be tailored to suit clients' needs
- estimate costs of installing and maintaining equipment or service
- prepare and administer sales contracts

Requirements:

- usually four-year college or university program in a relevant field
- experience in sales or in a technical occupation related to dentistry may be required

Skills:

- Ability to track trends and changes in dentistry and marketing
- Computer use including spreadsheet, scheduling and tracking software
- Listen well and be able to explain and/or sell your product
- Be accountable, attentive to detail, professional and punctual

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$27.00

<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search Technical Sales Specialists]

2. Employment Outlook

Dental Assistants

Job opportunities for **dental assistants** remain strong as B.C.'s growing population continues to increase the demand for dental services. The growth in awareness about good dental hygiene has increased the level of dental care in the general population. As people keep their natural teeth longer, older people will require more dental care than previously required. Cosmetic dental procedures, such as laser whitening and caps are also gaining popularity.

Since Level II (certified) dental assistants may perform a wider range of duties than Level I dental assistants and they are generally in higher demand.

Job Opening Outlook in BC for Dental Assistant



Chart from WorkBC

Dental Hygienists

Job opportunities for **dental hygienists** remain strong as B.C.'s growing population continues to increase the demand for dental services. There is a shortage of dental hygienists in rural communities of the province. Increased job opportunities may be available in these areas.

Job Opening Outlook in BC for Dental Hygienists



Chart from Work BC

Dental Technologists, Technicians and Dental Laboratory Assistants

Improvements to employee dental plans and an aging population have been credited for the increase in demand for dental procedures that require dental technicians.

Job Opening Outlook in BC for Dental Techs and Lab Assistants

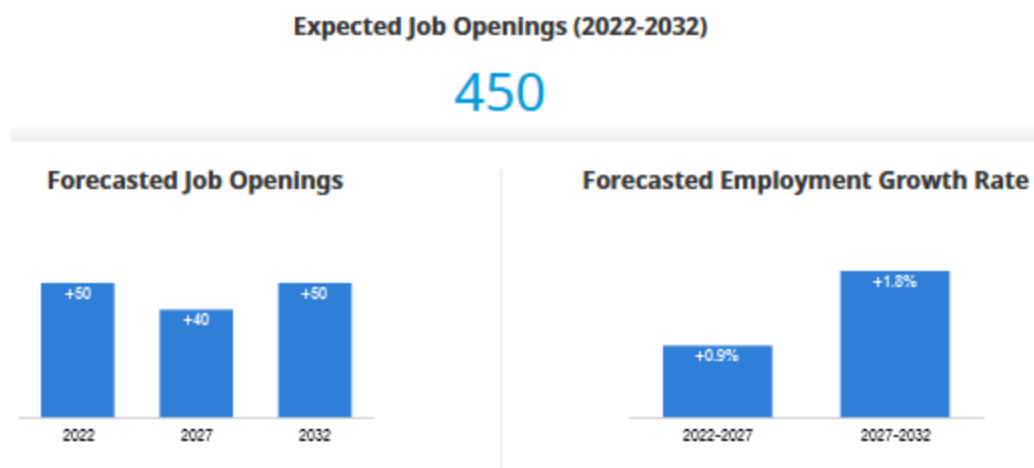


Chart from WorkBC

Job Opening Outlook in BC for Technical Sales Specialist

Expected Job Openings (2022-2032)

5,980

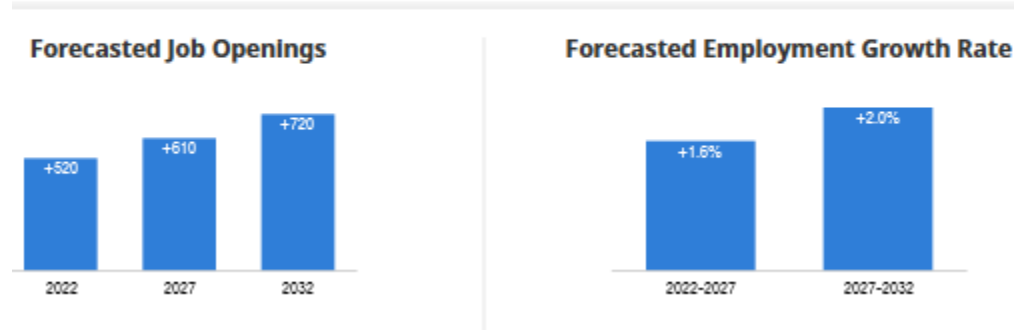


Chart from WorkBC

3. Retraining

You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skill set:

Vancouver Community College – Certified Dental Assisting

3 term, full time certificate program: Upon completion of the program, you are eligible to take the National Dental Assisting Board examination. The exam is for certification and registration with the BC College of Oral Health Professionals, the regulatory body for certified dental assistants.

<https://www.vcc.ca/programs/dental-assisting--certified/>

Vancouver Community College – Certified Dental Assisting – Online

Part-time distance learning (1.5 – 5 yrs), train from home to work as a member of a dental health team. This program provides education leading to a career as a certified and registered certified dental assistant.

<https://www.vcc.ca/programs/dental-assisting--certified-online/>

Vancouver Community College – Dental Hygiene Program

2 year, full time diploma program; you get hands-on training to provide dental care including examinations, cleaning, polishing, and assessments while working with the public at VCC's dental clinic.

<https://www.vcc.ca/programs/dental-hygiene/>

Vancouver Community College – Dental Technology Sciences

30 month, full-time diploma program; you learn traditional and digital technologies used in the design and fabrication of dental restorative prostheses, orthodontic appliances, and implant-supported restorations.

<https://www.vcc.ca/programs/dental-technology-sciences/>

4. Searching for Jobs

B.C. Dental Association / Certified Dental Assistants Alliance Job Board

<https://bcdental.org/cda-alliance-job-board/>

Dental Technicians of BC Job Board

<https://www.dentaltechniciansofbc.com/our-services/job-board>

Certified Dental Assistants of BC Job Board

<https://www.cdabc.org/employment/job-board>

UBC Faculty of Dentistry – Professional Job Postings

<https://www.dentistry.ubc.ca/alumni/professional-posting-services-for-alumni/>

Indeed.ca

<https://www.indeed.ca>

5. Volunteering in the Field

Volunteering in health care facilities and with service organizations can help you to explore a new career in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers.

Canadian Red Cross

<https://www.redcross.ca/in-your-community/british-columbia-and-yukon/british-columbia-and-yukon-volunteer-opportunities>

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

<https://www.vch.ca/en/about-us/get-involved/volunteer>

Fraser Health Authority

<https://www.fraserhealth.ca/about-us/volunteer-opportunities>

Providence Health Care

<https://www.providencehealthcare.org/volunteers>

Volunteer BC

<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

6. Helpful Resources

BC College of Oral Health Professionals

<https://oralhealthbc.ca/>

BC Dental Association

<https://www.bcdental.org>

Certified Dental Assistants of British Columbia

<https://www.cdabc.org/>

Dental Technicians of BC

<https://www.dentaltechniciansofbc.com/>

Fastest Growing Industries: Health Care

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/industry-profiles/fastest-growing-industries-health-care>

Click on 'Job Search Resources' at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- online social networks
- Canadian workplace culture

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

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