

accredited by the board for specialist education and training.

In the case of the speciality Oral Pathology, a person shall have obtained at least four years' education and training, of which at least two years shall have been in Pathology (Anatomical) at an academic teaching department of a teaching hospital accredited as such by the board.

They are registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. As a condition of licensure, they must meet continuing education requirements for the remainder of their careers, to keep them up-to-date on the latest scientific and clinical developments

Where do dentists and dental specialists work?

Most dentists and dental specialists are self-employed and work as general dental practitioners (GDPs) and dental specialists in their private practices providing dental care to the public.

Some dentists and dental specialists work in the public sector, private hospital groups, dental advisors to medical schemes, military health services and in academic institutions.

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SADA

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**Meet the
Dentist & Dental
Specialist**

Dentist

Dentistry is a branch of medicine that consists of the study, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of diseases, disorders and conditions of the oral cavity, commonly in the dentition but also the oral mucosa, and of adjacent and related structures and tissues, particularly in the maxillofacial (jaw and facial) area.

A dentist, also known as a dental surgeon, is a surgeon who specialises in dentistry, the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of diseases and conditions of the oral cavity. The dentist's supporting team aids in providing oral health services. The dental team includes dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental technicians, and in some cases, dental therapists.

Dentists are doctors who specialize in oral health. Their responsibilities include:

- Diagnosing oral diseases.
- Promoting oral health and disease prevention.
- Creating treatment plans to maintain or restore the oral health of their patients.
- Interpreting x-rays and diagnostic tests.
- Ensuring the safe administration of anaesthetics.
- Monitoring growth and development of the teeth and jaws.
- Performing surgical procedures on the teeth, bone and soft tissues of the oral cavity.

In addition, dentists can spot early warning signs in the mouth that may indicate disease elsewhere in the body. Dentists' training also enables them to recognize situations that warrant referring patients for care by dental specialists or physicians.

Dentists' oversight of the clinical team is critical to ensuring safe and effective oral care. Even seemingly routine procedures such as tooth extractions, preparing and placing fillings or administering anaesthetics carry potential risks of complications such as infection, temporary or even permanent nerve damage, prolonged bleeding, hematomas and pain.

Dental Specialists

There are six dental specialities, all of which require a minimum of three to four years full-time post-graduate study, leading to a higher qualification.

They are as follows:

Orthodontics

Orthodontists straighten crooked teeth or teeth that do not fit together properly and attend to malformations of the jaw and/or joint disorders. An increasing number of children and adults chew better, look better and their teeth last longer as a result of orthodontic treatment.

Prosthodontics

A prosthodontist specialises in restorative dentistry. This involves endodontics, the restoration of teeth with inlays, crowns, bridges and denture construction.

A prosthodontist also undertakes the restoration of implants, the construction of missing facial parts such as ears, noses and eyes and the treatment of some joint disorders.

Maxillo facial and Oral Surgery

Maxillo Facial and Oral Surgeons are concerned with the surgical removal of impacted and unerupted teeth. They correct deformities of the jaw, repair cleft palates and treat broken jaws and joint disorders. They form part of the dental team concerned with implant dentistry.

Oral Medicine & Periodontics

A periodontist diagnoses and treats gum disease. This involves treatment of the gums, root surfaces and surrounding bone. A periodontist also places implants in the jaws and is responsible for maintaining the teeth, gums and implants in good health.

Oral pathology

The oral pathologist is involved in the diagnosis of disease, its causes, processes and effects on the mouth and surrounding structures. The diagnosis may require the use of several different investigation procedures. The oral pathologist may recommend and assist with treatment of the patient.

Community dentistry

A community dentist is a dental specialist employed by the state who is concerned with public dental health. He/she may work only as an epidemiologist that is determining the causes of oral diseases in the population or may in certain circumstances render treatment to state patients.

What qualification do dentists and dental specialists have?

All dentists in South Africa must graduate from dental schools having completed a bachelor of dental science or equivalent.

The level of education and clinical training required to earn a dental degree, and the high academic standards of dental schools, are on par with those of medical schools and are essential to preparing dentists for the safe and effective practice of modern oral health care.

Dental specialists are dentists who have undergone further education and training in any of the dental specialities mentioned above

In the case of the specialities Community Dentistry, Maxillo-facial and Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine and Periodontics, Orthodontics and Prosthodontics, a person shall have obtained at least three years' education and training as the holder of a post of registrar approved by the board at a hospital, department or facility