

# International Federation of Dental Hygienists: Code of Ethics – Ethics Committee International Federation of Dental Hygienists

## Introduction

The fundamental responsibility of dental hygienists is to promote and restore oral health. Dental hygienists promote oral health by providing clinical, therapeutic remedies and health education. Dental hygienists serve the public as oral health professionals and thus contribute to the public's general health and well-being.

The need for dental hygiene services is universal and unrestricted by race, colour, age, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Dental hygienists are called upon to deliver care to the individual, the family and the community.

In a business relationship in which a dental hygienist is an employee the dental hygienist exhibits competence, loyalty and fair return of work for compensation. However, employee status does not minimize a dental hygienist's ethical responsibility to account for a patient's well-being. Nor does it lessen the dental hygienist's right to act competently, accountably and knowledgeably on behalf of the patient.

Dental hygiene care is provided with integrity and respect and in collaboration with other health care professionals.

## Values embedded in the code of ethics

Dental hygienists value integrity, and respect.

**Integrity** – Moral soundness; uprightness; sincerity; freedom from corrupting influence or motive. Dental hygienists value personal integrity and are honest, truthful, and respectful when interacting with other human beings. They value professional integrity and practice according to the profession's standards and values. Ethical practice requires both personal integrity and professional integrity.

**Respect** – To regard with special attention, to care for, to avoid violation of, or interference with. Dental hygienists value respect for persons and personal dignity as human beings are unique, in their abilities strengths, weaknesses and needs. Dental hygienists value respect for truthfulness.

Truthfulness is essential when assisting the patient to obtain relevant information about dental hygiene services, diagnosis, treatment and probable outcomes. Truthfulness builds trust. Dental hygienists value respect for individual choice. Patients have choices and can decide which services to accept or decline. Dental hygienists value respect for patient confidentiality. Confidentiality is preserved unless such confidentiality could pose substantial risk or serious harm and where that risk or harm is greater than the harm of breaking the confidentiality. Dental hygienists respect the natural environment. These values are embedded in the four principle elements of the code.

## Code of ethics

The code of ethics has four principal elements that outline the standards of ethical conduct. This establishes the standards of behaviour of dental hygienists and embodies integrity and respect.

1. Dental hygienists and people/society.
2. Dental hygienists and practice.
3. Dental hygienists and co-workers
4. Dental hygienists and the profession.

### **Dental hygienists and people/society**

The dental hygienist strives to promote an environment in which the human rights, values, customs, and spiritual beliefs of the individual, family and community are respected.

1. The dental hygienist endeavours to ensure that the individual receives sufficient and appropriate information on which to base consent for care and related dental hygiene treatment.
2. The dental hygienist provides services consistent with the patient's needs and requests.
3. The dental hygienist holds personal information confidential and uses professional reasoned judgment in sharing this information.

4. The dental hygienist protects the environment by responsible disposal of all wastes in the dental hygiene practice.
5. The dental hygienist's own personal interests, if in conflict with her/his professional obligation should be declared and resolved for the well-being of the client.

#### **Dental hygienists and practice**

1. The dental hygienist has the qualifications, knowledge, training, skills, judgment and attitudes to practice safely.
2. The dental hygienist has a thorough knowledge of the profession and its related laws.
3. The dental hygienist at all times practices with integrity and adheres to the standards of practice and personal conduct of her/his legislative jurisdiction.
4. The dental hygienist is personally responsible for remaining competent and current in her/his professional knowledge by continual education and training.
5. The dental hygienist provides a choice of services within a range of safe affordable options consistent with the patient's needs.
6. The dental hygienist provides timely competent care and charges reasonable fees for professional services.
7. The dental hygienist, in providing care, ensures that use of technology and scientific advances are compatible with the safety, dignity and rights of people.

#### **Dental hygienist and co-workers**

1. The dental hygienist sustains a cooperative and collaborative relationship with co-workers in oral health and other fields.

2. A dental hygienist recognizes particular skills and expertise of health care personnel working collaboratively in the patient's care.
3. A dental hygienist advocates for the patient when another oral health provider is giving inappropriate or incompetent care, inconsistent with the patient's well-being.

#### **Dental hygienists and the profession**

1. The dental hygienist adheres to and may exceed the standards of dental hygiene practice within the jurisdiction of the country of practice.
2. The dental hygienist is active in developing and publishing a core of research based on the ongoing pursuit of professional knowledge.
3. The dental hygienist, acting through the professional organization, participates in creating and maintaining equitable social and economic working conditions in oral health.
4. The dental hygienist promotes respect for human beings ensuring the profession protects their right to health.

Lynda McKeown  
*194 Varsity Row,*  
*Thunder Bay,*  
*ON P7B5P1, Canada*  
E-mail: lmckeown@baytel.net

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