

Scope of practice for dental therapy

The practice of dental therapy is the provision of oral health assessment, diagnosis, management, treatment and prevention of any disease, disorder or condition of the orofacial complex and associated structures in accordance with this scope of practice, and a dental therapist's approved education, training, experience and competence. Dental therapy services are provided to children and adolescents up to age 18.

Disease prevention, oral health promotion and maintenance are core activities, [aimed at achieving and maintaining oral health as an integral part of general health.](#)

[Dental therapists practise as part of the dental team and work collaboratively with other oral health practitioners and health practitioners to provide appropriate and comprehensive care to the benefit of patients' overall health.](#)

Dental therapists [and dentists](#) have a consultative [professional working](#) relationship ~~with dentists or dental specialists~~. [The relationship may be between a dental therapist and one dentist or dental specialist or a dental therapist and a number of dentists or dental specialists. The establishment and maintenance of the consultative professional relationship is required for the practice of dental therapy.](#)

[Practitioners within the consultative professional relationship are jointly responsible and accountable for the standard of decisions and care delivered to patients based on professional advice sought and given. Practitioners may wish to jointly develop a document containing agreed processes to support the consultative professional relationship and ensure advice is readily available when needed, however this is not mandatory.](#)

Dental therapy practice includes:

- obtaining medical histories and consulting with other health practitioners as appropriate
- examination of oral tissues, diagnosis of dental caries and recognition of abnormalities
- preparation of an oral care plan
- informed consent procedures
- administration of local anaesthetic using dentoalveolar infiltration, inferior dental nerve block and topical local anaesthetic techniques
- preparation of cavities and restoration of primary and permanent teeth using direct placement of appropriate dental materials
- extraction of primary teeth
- pulp capping in primary and permanent teeth
- preventive dentistry including cleaning, polishing and scaling (to remove deposits in association with gingivitis), fissure sealants, and fluoride applications
- oral health education and promotion
- taking of impressions for, constructing and fitting mouthguards²
- referral as necessary to the appropriate practitioner/agency
- performing pulpotomies on primary teeth
- taking and interpreting periapical and bitewing radiographs
- preparing teeth for and placing stainless steel crowns on primary teeth.

Practice in this context goes wider than clinical dental therapy practice to include teaching, research, and management, given that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety. Areas of dental therapy practice which were not included in a practitioner's training should not be

undertaken unless the practitioner has completed appropriate training and practises to the standards required by the Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners.

~~1 Further detail on the consultative working relationship between dental therapists and dentists or dental specialists is set out in the relevant Dental Council Practice Standard~~

~~2 Dental therapists who have not received training in this area as part of their undergraduate programme can undertake this activity only in accordance with the Dental Council's Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners~~

Scope of practice for adult care in dental therapy practice

The practice of dental therapy on adults is the provision of oral health assessment, treatment, management and prevention services within the general dental therapy scope of practice for adult patients aged 18 years and older.

~~Adult care in dental therapy practice is provided in a team situation with dentists and dental therapists typically working in the same premises. Disease prevention, oral health promotion and maintenance are core activities.~~

Depending on the dental therapist's qualifications adult care in dental therapy practice is provided either:

~~a) within a consultative professional relationship, OR~~

~~b)~~

~~a) within a consultative professional relationship and with the dentist or dental specialist who is responsible for the patient's clinical care outcomes on-site at the time. This is provided in a team situation under direct clinical supervision³ or the clinical guidance⁴ of a practising dentist or dental specialist. Disease prevention, oral health promotion and maintenance are core activities.~~

Practice in this context goes wider than clinical dental therapy practice to include teaching, research, and management, given that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety. Areas of adult care in dental therapy practice which were not included in a practitioner's training should not be undertaken unless the practitioner has completed appropriate training and practises to the standards required by the Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners.

~~3 Direct clinical supervision means the clinical supervision provided to a dental therapist by a practising dentist or dental specialist when the dentist is present on the premises at the time the dental therapy work is carried out~~

~~4 Clinical guidance means the professional support and assistance provided to a dental therapist by a practising dentist or dental specialist as part of the provision of overall integrated care to the adult patient group. Dental therapists and dentists/specialists normally work from the same premises providing a team approach. Clinical guidance may be provided at a distance but appropriate access must be available to ensure that the dentist or specialist is able to provide guidance and advice, when required and maintain general oversight of the clinical care outcomes of the adult patient group.~~