

**1. What does the term ethics mean to you?**

Ethics means acting with honesty, fairness, and integrity while making responsible while prioritizing the patient's well being. As a healthcare professional, it means every patient needs to be treated with honesty, fairness, and respect regardless of their background. It is also about putting the patients well being first, practicing patient safety, and promoting their oral health. I am responsible for my actions and committed to maintaining high personal and professional standards.

When I was working as a dental assistant, I accidentally pinched a patient's gum with a hemostat while removing a temporary crown. Although the patient was numb at the time, I demonstrated accountability by acknowledging my mistake and informing both the patient and the doctor. I was honest about what occurred, even though it was a minor incident. The tissue was pinched enough that the patient may experience some temporary discomfort afterward. While this is not uncommon during dental procedures, I believed that maintaining trust required full transparency to the patient.

**2. What is the purpose of a professional code of ethics?**

The purpose of a professional code of ethics in dental hygiene is to set values and standards that guide in making ethical decisions and maintaining professionalism. Making ethical decisions protects the patient by promoting safety while allowing the patient to receive high quality care. In addition, this allows the patient to build trust with the provider.

The professional code of ethics not only sets standards for patients but it guides professional conduct with team members, colleagues, and with the community. Following principles will help professionals act professionally, set positive examples, and represent the dental hygiene profession with integrity and respect.

**3. List and explain the seven basic beliefs outlined in the Dental Hygiene professional code of ethics.**

**1. "The service we provide contributes to the health and well being of society"**

This profession is vital to public health because it helps prevent oral diseases and educates the importance of preventative care.

2. **“Our education and licensure qualify us to serve the public by preventing and treating oral diseases and helping individuals achieve and maintain optimal health.”**  
Dental hygienists are trained and licensed professionals that improve public health by preventing and treating oral diseases.
  3. **“Individuals have intrinsic worth, are responsible for their own health, and are entitled to make choices regarding their health.”**  
People are valuable and are entitled to make their own choices about their health. Dental hygienists are there to provide education and support.
  4. **“Dental hygiene care is an essential component of overall health and we function interdependently with other health care providers.”**  
Dental hygiene is an important part of health and the dental hygienists collaborate with other providers to support patient care.
  5. **“All people should have access to health care, including oral health care.”**  
Dental care should be available for everyone. No one should be discriminated against either.
  6. **“We are individually responsible for our actions and the quality of care we provide.”**  
Dental hygienists are accountable for making sure patients receive quality care which includes making appropriate dental hygiene diagnoses and practicing nonmaleficence by avoiding harm.
  7. **“We are obligated to be inclusive, diverse and to promote equity for access to ourselves and career opportunities.”**  
Dental hygienists are responsible for treating individuals fairly and also have fair chances to enter the dental hygiene profession.
4. **Define the fundamental principles as outlined in our code of ethics.**
- **Universality:** The judgement of making fair ethical decisions should be implied at all times to all patients.
  - **Complementarity:** Values and viewpoints of others should be taken into consideration before taking action.
  - **Ethics:** The moral practice that guides the dental hygienist's behavior and decision making in order to ensure respectful, honest, and quality patient care.
  - **Community:** Encourages dental hygienists to make connections with society and to care about the large community such as showing concern for the global environment and the preservation of natural resources.

**- Responsibility:** This principle is at the core of ethics. Dental hygienists are expected to understand and follow ethical guidelines when making decisions, taking accountability for their actions, and publicly stand by their choices.

**5. Define the Standards of Responsibility as outlined in our code of ethics and whom are we responsible to?**

The Standard of Professional Responsibility states that dental hygienists are obligated to practice our profession in a manner that supports our purpose, beliefs, and values in accordance with the fundamental principle that supports our ethics. It outlines the ethical duties that guide dental hygienists to practice safely and professionally.

Dental Hygienists have responsibilities to the following nine groups:

1. To ourselves as individuals
2. To ourselves as professionals
3. To family and friends
4. To clients
5. To colleagues
6. To employees and employers
7. To the dental hygiene profession
8. To the community and society
9. To scientific investigation

**6. Have you been asked to do something against your ethical principles in a previous job? If so, how did you handle the situation? If not, how would you handle this situation?**

During my employment as a dental assistant, I was asked to participate in actions that conflicted with my ethical principles and professional standards. The situation did not align with my personal and professional values, so I reinforced veracity by being honest and communicating my discomfort to the doctor. I also showed accountability by taking responsibility for my actions. By removing myself from the situation, I supported nonmaleficence and demonstrated the principle of professionalism. In addition, this experience reinforced the importance of autonomy as well.