

Career Exploration Centre

Online



 **SAIT**
**YOUNG
ORIGINALS**

Dental Assistant

Career Description

Dental assistants help dentists, dental hygienists, and dental therapists during the examination and treatment of patients. They may also perform routine dental office duties.

They are employed by:

- Dental offices
- Community health centres
- Educational institutions
- Dental clinics

Working conditions:

Most dental assistants work in office type setting, with separate patient rooms. They often need to work some evenings and weekends.

Skills and abilities:

Dental assistants need to possess:

- the ability to pay close attention to detail
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- critical thinking skills
- the ability to be organized and manage their time well

Stats:

Average salary in Alberta: \$51,546.00 Annually*

Average wage: \$29.29/Hour*

Minimum education: 1-year post-secondary

*Statistics from 2018, alis.alberta.ca

For more Alberta career information and stats:

<https://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/occupations-in-alberta/occupation-profiles/dental-assistant/>

Activity Mission

You will complete two duties of a dental assistant:

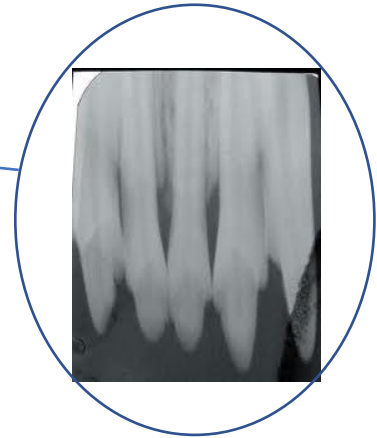
1. Select the best X-rays
2. Review helpful and harmful foods

Task 1: Select the Best X-Rays

Background

There are two good qualities of an x-ray:

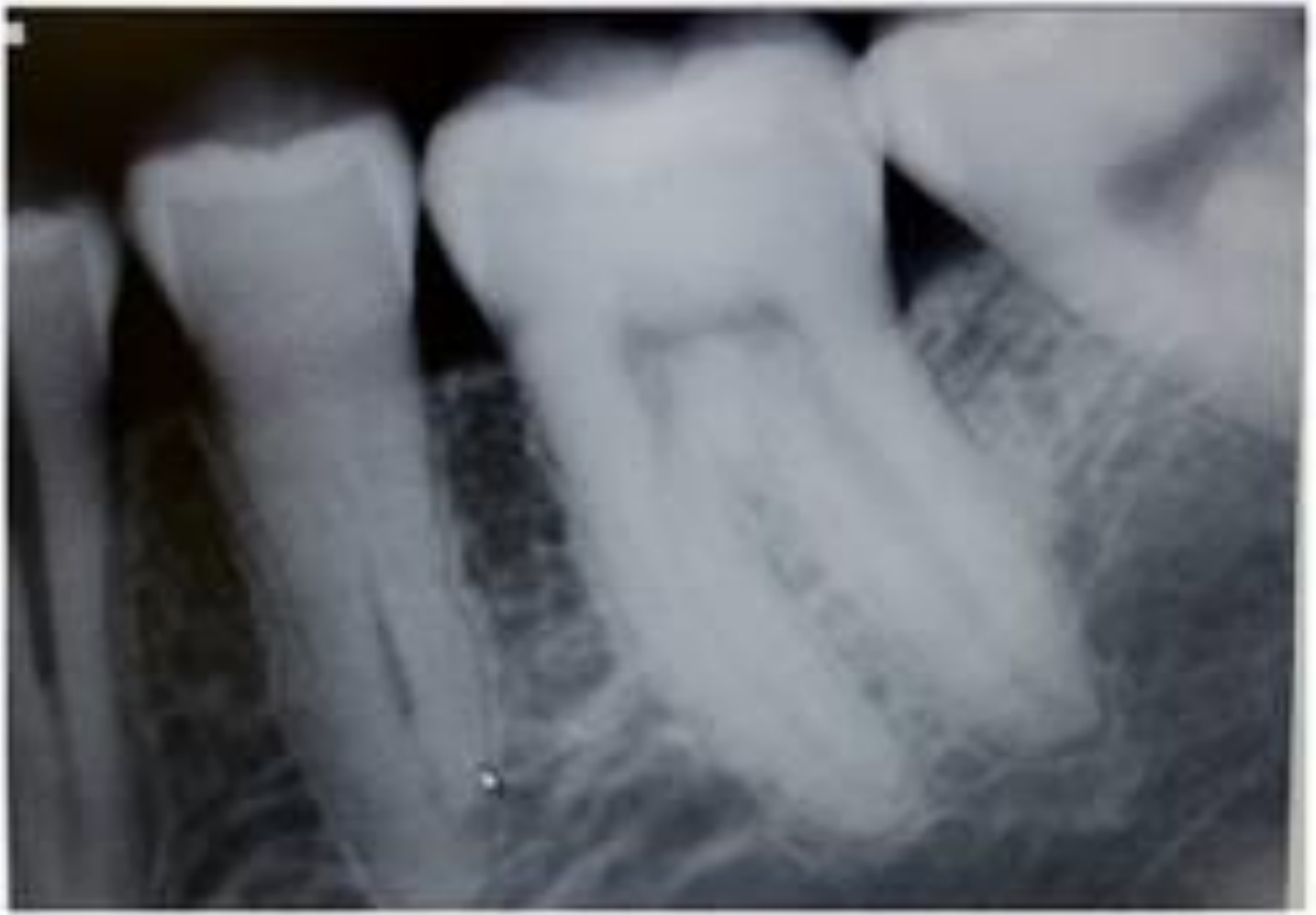
1. The Image must not be stretched or elongated
2. Everything must be captured on the x-ray



Instructions

1. Review the x-rays on the next 5 pages.
2. Decide which x-rays you think are the best 3 based on the above criteria.
3. **Bonus Questions:** How many teeth does an adult have? How many teeth can you identify in x-ray #4?
4. Check the answer at the end of the activity.

X-Ray #1



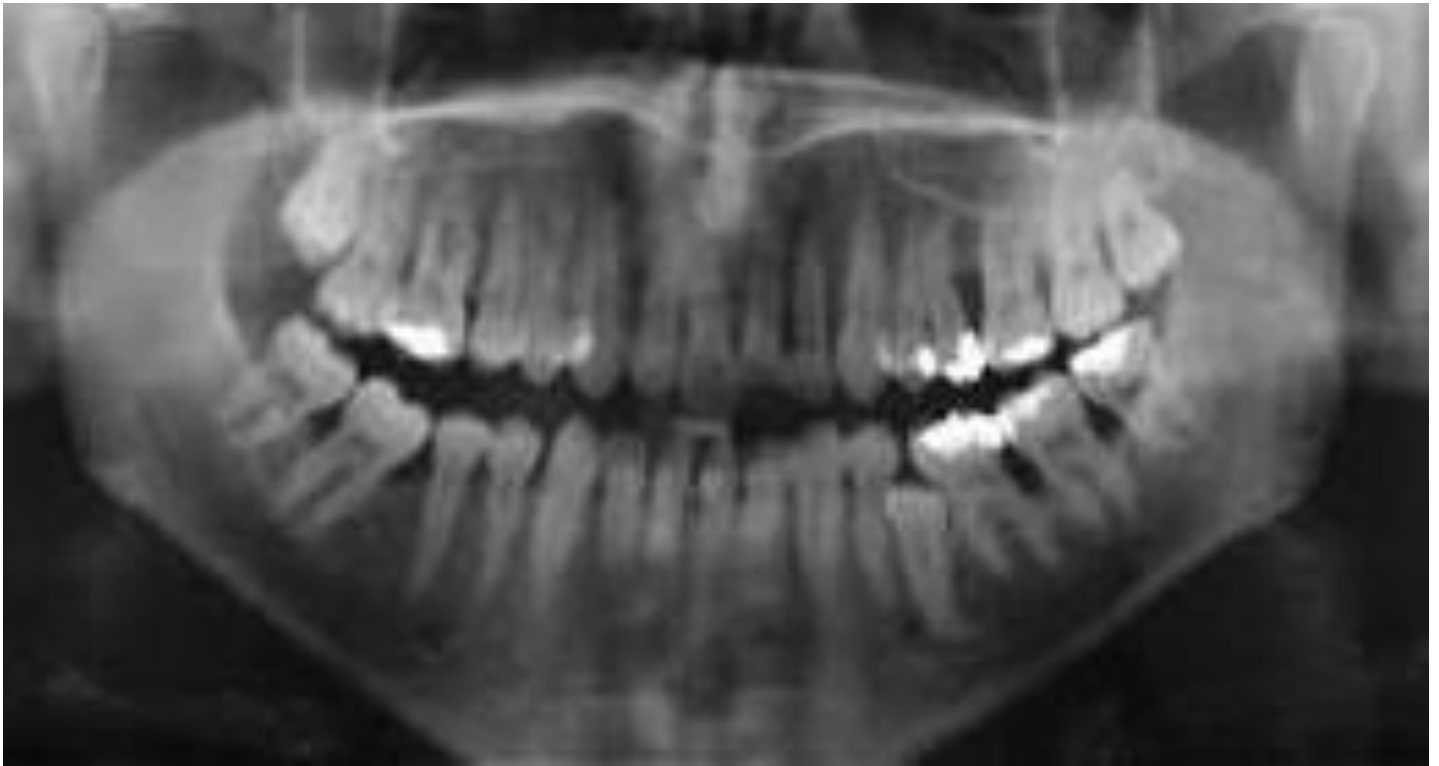
X-Ray #2



X-Ray #3



X-Ray #4



X-Ray #5



Task 2: Harmful and Helpful Foods

Background

Dental assistants teach people how to care for their teeth. They need to understand the types of foods that are good for teeth and those which are bad.

Did you know?

Being comfortable speaking with people, communicating information effectively, and working as part of a team are important skills required by dental assistants.

Instructions

1. Using the food images on the next few pages, decide which foods could be helpful to teeth and which foods are harmful.
2. Think about why each food item is helpful or harmful and write down your answers.
3. Check the answer key at the end of this activity.
4. If possible, have a family member be your patient and educate them on the food items as a dental assistant would educate the patients in their office.

To learn about SAIT's Dental Assisting program, please visit:

<https://www.sait.ca/programs-and-courses/full-time-studies/certificates/dental-assisting>

Helpful or Harmful Foods



Grapes



Almonds



Raisins



Tea

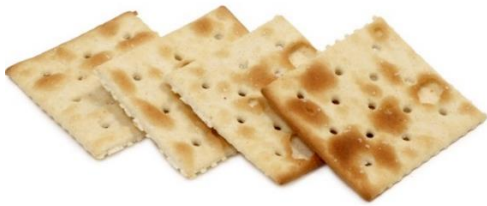


Ice Cubes



Apples

Helpful or Harmful Foods



Crackers



Fruit Juice



Chewing Gum



Potatoes



Strawberries



Celery

Helpful or Harmful Foods



Pickles



Chips



Flavoured Water



Honey



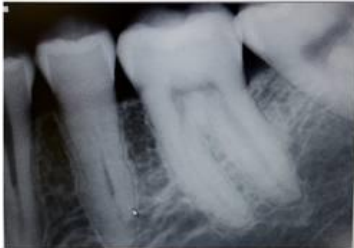
Dried Fruit

(other than raisins)

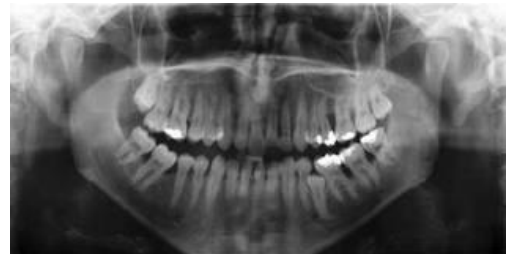
Task 1 Answer Key

Best X-Rays

X-ray #1



X-ray #3



X-ray #4

Poor X-Rays

X-Ray #2



Part of the image is cut off

X-ray #5



The image is elongated

Bonus question: An adult has 32 teeth. This patient is missing one tooth!

Task 2 Answer Key

Foods that Help Your Teeth

- **Almonds** – They contain calcium which makes your teeth (and bones) stronger.
- **Apples** – It takes a lot of chewing to eat an apple, and chewing cleans your teeth. Bacteria get cleared away instead of settling on your teeth.
- **Celery** – It increases saliva in your mouth which helps clean your teeth. Celery is also high in vitamin C which prevents gum disease.
- **Cranberries** – They contain phytochemicals which may stop bacteria from sticking to your teeth. Be careful that the cranberries are natural – some products have added sugar because cranberries are naturally sour.
- **Gum** – If it's sugarless, it's good! Chewing sugarless gum after meals increases saliva which will help reduce harmful acids that destroy tooth enamel. (Gum is also on the BAD FOODS list!)
- **Potatoes** – They are full of healthy vitamins and minerals so they're good for your teeth.
- **Raisins** – Unlike other dried fruit, raisins are a source of phytochemicals which help kill the bacteria that cause cavities.
- **Strawberries** – They may help whiten your teeth because they contain an enzyme called malic acid (found in some whitening toothpastes).
- **Tea** – It contains phytochemicals which slow the growth of bacteria associated with cavities and gum disease.

Task 2 Answer Key

Foods that Hurt Your Teeth

- **Crackers** – The refined carbohydrates found in crackers change to sugar in your mouth very quickly, providing “food” for the bacteria that cause cavities.
- **Chips** – Like crackers, the carbohydrates in chips convert to sugar in your mouth very quickly!
- **Dried fruit** – They are full of sugar which is very bad for your teeth. The gum-like texture of dried fruit means it may also stick to your teeth just like candy.
- **Flavoured water** – Some vitamin waters contain as much sugar as candy bars!
- **Fruit juice** – Although fruit is an important part of a healthy diet, fruit juice can cause problems for your teeth because of the extra sugar that may be added. The sugar creates acid in your mouth, which attacks your teeth and can cause tooth decay.
- **Gum** – If it’s filled with sugar, it’s bad!
- **Honey** – Although it’s delicious, if honey is consumed regularly, it can cause tooth decay because of the high percentage of natural sugars.
- **Ice cubes**– Just because they’re made of water doesn’t mean they’re good for your teeth! Chewing on hard substances can damage tooth enamel.
- **Pickles** – The pickling process uses vinegar which is an acid that may break down and eat away at tooth enamel.