



***We are committed to improving oral health in our community through our members and alliances.***

With this straightforward mission, the Seattle-King County Dental Society strives to improve the quality of life for King County residents. There are clear links between good oral health and good overall health, so our efforts lead to a healthier community. Our members improve oral health with dedication, integrity, compassion and with a drive for excellence.

Founded in the late 1800's, the Seattle-King County Dental Society is the local component of the Washington State Dental Association and the American Dental Association. We are a voluntary membership society of the almost 1,700 dentists and specialists practicing in King County, Washington. Our non-profit organization works to promote good oral health in King County, Washington and to advance the interests of dentistry and its members. The Society provides important educational opportunities for the general public as well as continuing dental education courses for its members.

Our Society provides numerous services to the general public. We answer over 500 telephone calls a month from residents seeking dental care and refer them to appropriate service providers. We offer a free mediation process for patients who wish to discuss their recent treatment by a member dentist. We also offer several programs—like Donated Dental Services and our partnership with the Northwest Kidney Centers—whereby our member dentists volunteer to treat patients at no cost. (Please see our Community Initiatives sheet for more information on our programs that benefit the general public.)

Our sister organization, the Seattle-King County Dental Foundation, is dedicated to proactively eliminating dental infection and pain in the King County population that lacks resources and/or access to dental care. The Foundation provides grants to organizations that help us achieve our mission.

To learn more about us, we invite you to visit our website at [www.skcds.org](http://www.skcds.org) or call us at (206) 443-7607.



***Our Foundation is dedicated to proactively eliminating dental infection and pain in the King County population that lacks resources and/or access to dental care....***

*...The Foundation implements its mission by advocating and facilitating access for the underserved; increasing awareness of and resources for new and existing programs; partnering with others that can help; and, demonstrating responsible use of our resources to our donors.*

Since its creation by the Dental Society in 1992, the Seattle-King County Dental Foundation has been our philanthropic arm and has awarded grants totaling well over \$800,000. This 501 (c)3 organization raises funds to promote its important works from the members of the Seattle-King County Dental Society and others dedicated to improving the oral health of King County residents.

The Foundation has made grants to over 30 non-profit and educational organizations that work to eliminate dental infection and pain. Below are just a few of the organizations we have supported:

- Donated Dental Services which matches non-insured adults with volunteer dentists and dental lab technicians;
- International Community Health Center's dental clinic;
- Medical Teams International's dental vans;
- Neighborcare Health's Georgetown Dental Clinic;
- A Dental clinic for severely disabled individuals; and, the
- University of Washington's Mobile Geriatric Dental Clinic.

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*The Seattle-King County Dental Society supports a number of initiatives which help it achieve its mission. Among them are:*

**Referral Services** — Each month, the Dental Society provides over 500 telephone referrals for individuals seeking dental care. In addition to making referrals to private practice dentists, the Society maintains extensive information about sliding fee scale clinics that provide dental services to those without dental insurance.

**Donated Dental Services** — Society members, working in conjunction with several local dental labs, volunteer and provide free dental care to disabled, elderly or working poor King County citizens. Since its inception in 2000, individuals have received free care worth \$2,627,541 through this program.

**Give Kids a Smile Day Activities** — These events offer an opportunity for parents to have their children's dental health assessed at no charge at several volunteer dental offices. It is promoted through the media, Boys & Girls Clubs and the schools. Dentists offer free screenings and/or treatment during their office visits.

**Access to Baby & Child Dentistry** — This partnership between the Society and Public Health Seattle-King County focuses on improving the oral health of Medicaid eligible children and emphasizes getting the child into a dentist as soon as possible.

**Forensic Committee** — In cooperation with related emergency services groups in the area, this committee works to maintain a contingency plan to handle various situations calling for forensic dental assistance and identification.

**Peer Review Committee** — This committee, composed of experienced dentists, provides a venue whereby disputes concerning quality or appropriateness of care between patients and dentists can be mediated and resolved to all parties' satisfaction.

**Access Committee's initiative with Northwest Kidney Centers** — Seattle-King County Dental Society partners with the Northwest Kidney Centers to provide free treatment to kidney patients on dialysis and awaiting transplant. In order for them to receive this life-saving treatment, the kidney patients must be infection free—including no oral health disease.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Is there a link between general health and oral health?

According to the 2000 national report, *Oral Health in America: A Report to the Surgeon General*, “oral diseases and conditions are associated with other health problems. Oral infections can be the source of systemic infections in people with weakened immune systems, and oral signs and symptoms often are part of a general health condition. Associations between chronic oral infections and other health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, and adverse pregnancy outcomes, have also been reported.” As the report concludes, “oral health is integral to general health... [and] oral health means more than healthy teeth.”

## How many King County residents have dental insurance?

According to national reports, “insurance coverage for dental care is increasing but still lags behind medical insurance.” According to the National Association of Dental Plans, 39% of Americans have no dental insurance. A study done by Seattle-King County Public Health Department in 2008 on dental safety net providers cites a 2001 survey which states “27% or approximately 382,000 of King County adults had no dental insurance.” While this is the most recent information, we can only assume the percentage has increased in the current economic climate.

It is also worth noting that even those with employer-funded dental insurance may have low reimbursement levels and coverage insufficient for effective dental care. For many, their dental insurance, on average, covers 50% of the cost for the procedure. Moreover, as the general population ages, retires and loses their work-based dental insurance, access to appropriate levels of dental insurance may diminish or disappear entirely.

## Where do King County residents who don't have dental insurance get care?

King County is fortunate to have almost 30 different facilities that provide care on a reduced or sliding scale fee basis. The Dental Society maintains a list of all King County facilities and the populations they serve on its website at [www.skcds.org](http://www.skcds.org). The vast majority of our members also provide charitable care in their offices.

## Why should the public water supply be fluoridated?

Community water fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention proclaimed water fluoridation as one of 10 great public health initiatives of the 21st Century. Studies conducted by various scientific organizations over many years have established that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay in adults and children. It is one of the most efficient ways to prevent one of the most common childhood diseases — tooth decay (5 times more common than asthma).

## How does the Dental Society help the dental practitioner?

The Society provides many membership benefits in addition to numerous reduced cost continuing dental education courses. We offer a peer review process for patients who may be dissatisfied with the quality or appropriateness of their care. We provide many opportunities for the dentist to be involved in promoting good oral health such as Give Kids a Smile Day and/or to donate care through Society-sponsored free care programs. We also advocate for our practitioners by educating legislators and regulatory agencies on standards of care and dental care delivery issues.

## What is the difference between a dentist and a dental hygienist?

Dentists, with their extensive education, diagnose any type of oral disease and are licensed to treat oral health problems. Hygienists are licensed to work in conjunction with a supervising dentist to treat oral disease.

A dentist follows the curriculum requirements set by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation. Generally, an undergraduate education plus four years of dental school is required to graduate and become a general dentist.

Dental hygienists receive their education, with its emphasis on preventative rather than restorative treatment, through programs at community colleges, technical colleges, dental schools or universities. The majority of these programs take at least two years to complete, with graduates receiving associate degrees. Receipt of this degree allows a hygienist to take licensure examinations (national and state or regional), become licensed and to work in a dental office under the supervision of a dentist.

## What is the difference between a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) and a DMD (Doctor of Medicine)?

There is no difference between the two degrees; dentists who have a DMD or DDS have the same education. Universities have the prerogative to determine what degree is awarded, with about one-third of them awarding DMD degrees. State licensing boards accept either degree as equivalent, and both degrees allow licensed individuals to practice the same scope of general dentistry.

## What is a dental specialist?

Additional post-graduate training, after receiving one's DDS or DMD, is required to become a dental specialist. There are nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association, such as an orthodontist, periodontist, pediatric dentist, endodontist or oral surgeon.