

National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) Dental Hygienist Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

- 1. What palpation technique involves using the fingers and thumbs of both hands during an extraoral exam?**
 - A. Digital palpation**
 - B. Bilateral palpation**
 - C. Bidigital palpation**
 - D. Manual palpation**
- 2. Which of the following is NOT a common symptom of gingivitis?**
 - A. Red, swollen gums**
 - B. Pain when chewing**
 - C. Bleeding gums**
 - D. Bad breath**
- 3. Which instrument is primarily used for probing periodontal pockets?**
 - A. Explorer**
 - B. Probe**
 - C. Scalpel**
 - D. Curette**
- 4. What brushing technique involves the bristles aimed toward the gingival margin and rolling the brush toward the occlusal surface?**
 - A. Fones**
 - B. Roll**
 - C. Leonard**
 - D. Charters**
- 5. What is indicated by a plaque index range of 2.0-3.0?**
 - A. Excellent**
 - B. Poor**
 - C. Good**
 - D. Fair**

- 6. What is the primary use of Listerine in dental practice?**
- A. Subgingival irrigation**
 - B. Antimicrobial treatment**
 - C. Fluoride application**
 - D. Orthodontic care**
- 7. What is the primary purpose of root hemisection?**
- A. To remove tooth decay**
 - B. To treat periodontal disease**
 - C. To preserve remaining tooth structure**
 - D. To perform a complete tooth extraction**
- 8. What processes fail to fuse during fetal development resulting in a bilateral cleft lip?**
- A. Palatine and lateral nasal processes**
 - B. Maxillary and medial nasal processes**
 - C. Maxillary and palatine processes**
 - D. Medial nasal and lateral nasal processes**
- 9. In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, what is the most fundamental need that must be met?**
- A. Self**
 - B. Self Esteem**
 - C. Physiological Needs**
 - D. Actualization**
- 10. Which type of need comes after physiological needs according to Maslow's hierarchy?**
- A. Social Needs**
 - B. Self Esteem**
 - C. Safety and Security**
 - D. Actualization**

Answers

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1. C
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. C
10. C

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Explanations

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1. What palpation technique involves using the fingers and thumbs of both hands during an extraoral exam?

- A. Digital palpation**
- B. Bilateral palpation**
- C. Bidigital palpation**
- D. Manual palpation**

The bidigital palpation technique involves the use of fingers and thumbs from both hands to examine a specific area of the body. This method is particularly effective for assessing structures that are more superficial and require a combination of finger pressure to feel for abnormalities. In dental hygiene practice, bidigital palpation is commonly employed in extraoral examinations, especially when evaluating lymph nodes or the borders of the mandible. By utilizing both hands, the practitioner can apply pressure more accurately and evenly, allowing for better detection of any irregularities or changes in texture that could indicate pathology. This technique is essential for thorough examinations and enables clinicians to gather critical information about a patient's health status beyond just the oral cavity.

2. Which of the following is NOT a common symptom of gingivitis?

- A. Red, swollen gums**
- B. Pain when chewing**
- C. Bleeding gums**
- D. Bad breath**

Gingivitis is primarily characterized by inflammation of the gums due to the accumulation of plaque, and its common symptoms include red, swollen gums; bleeding gums, especially during brushing or flossing; and bad breath resulting from bacterial activity in the mouth. The presence of these symptoms indicates that the gum tissue is irritated and inflamed. Pain when chewing, however, is not typically associated with gingivitis. While advanced periodontal disease can lead to discomfort or pain due to more severe gum and bone involvement, gingivitis itself is usually devoid of significant pain. Patients may feel mild sensitivity, but pronounced pain when chewing is more characteristic of other dental issues, such as cavities, tooth abscesses, or periodontal disease. Recognizing the distinction between these conditions is crucial for proper diagnosis and treatment in dental practice.

3. Which instrument is primarily used for probing periodontal pockets?

- A. Explorer
- B. Probe**
- C. Scalpel
- D. Curette

The instrument primarily used for probing periodontal pockets is the probe. A periodontal probe is specifically designed to measure the depth of the pockets surrounding each tooth, allowing dental professionals to assess the health of the gingiva and the presence of periodontal disease. The probe is marked with calibrated measurements that enable precise depth readings, which are crucial for diagnosis and treatment planning. An explorer, while helpful in assessing the texture and contour of the tooth surface, is not designed specifically for measuring pocket depths. A scalpel is utilized for surgical procedures and incisions in soft tissue, while a curette is primarily employed for scaling and root planing, not for measuring pocket depths. Understanding the proper use and purpose of these tools is essential for effective periodontal assessment and management.

4. What brushing technique involves the bristles aimed toward the gingival margin and rolling the brush toward the occlusal surface?

- A. Fones
- B. Roll**
- C. Leonard
- D. Charters

The brushing technique that involves positioning the bristles toward the gingival margin and then rolling the brush toward the occlusal surface is known as the roll technique. This method is designed to effectively clean both the teeth and the surrounding gum tissue. By angling the bristles towards the gum line, it helps in removing plaque and debris from the gingival margin, which can contribute to gingival diseases if not properly cleaned. The rolling action then gently sweeps the bristles down toward the chewing surface of the teeth, promoting a thorough cleaning and helping to stimulate the gums. Other techniques mentioned, like Fones, involve circular brushing motions primarily used for children or those with limited manual dexterity. The Leonard technique focuses on a vertical brushing motion, while Charters' method is aimed at orthodontic patients and involves an angled approach to clean interproximal areas. These techniques have differing approaches and are tailored for specific needs, whereas the roll technique is versatile for general oral hygiene.

5. What is indicated by a plaque index range of 2.0-3.0?

- A. Excellent
- B. Poor**
- C. Good
- D. Fair

A plaque index range of 2.0-3.0 indicates a poor level of oral hygiene. This scoring system typically uses a scale where lower scores represent better plaque control and higher scores indicate increasing levels of plaque accumulation. A range from 2.0 to 3.0 suggests that there is a moderate amount of plaque present on the teeth, which may lead to an increased risk of dental problems like gingivitis or cavities if not addressed. Therefore, this range reflects a need for improved oral hygiene practices to reduce plaque build-up and enhance overall dental health.

6. What is the primary use of Listerine in dental practice?

- A. Subgingival irrigation
- B. Antimicrobial treatment**
- C. Fluoride application
- D. Orthodontic care

Listerine is primarily used in dental practice as an antimicrobial treatment. Its formulation includes essential oils and other compounds that help reduce the microbial load in the oral cavity. The use of Listerine can aid in controlling plaque, gingivitis, and bad breath by targeting periodontal pathogens, which is crucial in maintaining oral health. While subgingival irrigation can involve antiseptic solutions, Listerine is not typically employed specifically for this purpose in the same way. Fluoride application is important for caries prevention, but Listerine does not provide significant fluoride benefits. Furthermore, in orthodontic care, the focus is on maintaining oral hygiene and space management rather than the specific antimicrobial effects that products like Listerine offer. Thus, its role as an antimicrobial mouth rinse stands out as the primary use in dental practices.

7. What is the primary purpose of root hemisection?

- A. To remove tooth decay
- B. To treat periodontal disease
- C. To preserve remaining tooth structure**
- D. To perform a complete tooth extraction

The primary purpose of root hemisection is to preserve remaining tooth structure. This procedure is typically performed on multirooted teeth that have developed significant decay or periodontal disease affecting one of the roots. By removing only the affected root while conserving the healthy portion of the tooth, root hemisection allows for the retention of more of the tooth structure than a complete extraction would. This is important as it maintains the integrity of the dental arch and can help avoid issues associated with missing teeth, such as shifting of the remaining teeth and changes to the bite. While managing tooth decay, treating periodontal disease, and complete extraction are all relevant to dental procedures, those options don't specifically highlight the intention behind root hemisection. The procedure's key goal is to enable the preservation of healthy structures, thus maximizing the lifespan of the tooth and maintaining functional and aesthetic benefits for the patient.

8. What processes fail to fuse during fetal development resulting in a bilateral cleft lip?

- A. Palatine and lateral nasal processes**
- B. Maxillary and medial nasal processes**
- C. Maxillary and palatine processes**
- D. Medial nasal and lateral nasal processes**

A bilateral cleft lip occurs due to the failure of fusion between the maxillary processes and the medial nasal processes during fetal development. Normally, during embryogenesis, these structures come together to form a continuous upper lip. If this fusion does not occur correctly, it results in a gap that characterizes a cleft lip. The maxillary processes contribute to the formation of the sides of the upper lip, while the medial nasal processes are responsible for forming the center part. If these areas do not unite, a cleft can form, potentially on both sides of the lip, hence "bilateral." This is a critical aspect of embryonic facial development, and understanding it helps in recognizing the implications for surgical correction and management in affected individuals.

9. In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, what is the most fundamental need that must be met?

- A. Self**
- B. Self Esteem**
- C. Physiological Needs**
- D. Actualization**

The most fundamental need in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is physiological needs. These needs are the basic requirements for human survival, including air, water, food, warmth, rest, and shelter. According to Maslow, until these essential physiological needs are satisfied, individuals are unlikely to focus on higher-level needs, such as safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In other words, physiological needs serve as the foundation of the hierarchy. Once these basic needs are met, individuals can then move on to address higher-level needs. Understanding this concept is crucial for those in healthcare and dental hygiene, as it highlights the importance of ensuring that patients' basic needs are addressed for their overall well-being before they can fully engage in or appreciate dental and health care services.

10. Which type of need comes after physiological needs according to Maslow's hierarchy?

A. Social Needs

B. Self Esteem

C. Safety and Security

D. Actualization

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, after physiological needs, the next level is safety and security. This level emphasizes the importance of feeling safe from physical and emotional harm, as well as the stability and predictability of one's environment. Safety needs can encompass various aspects such as personal security, health, financial security, and well-being. Individuals must satisfy these safety needs before they can focus on higher-level needs. For instance, once basic survival needs, such as food and shelter, are met, individuals will seek safety in their environment to ensure they are not living in fear or anxiety. Understanding this progression is crucial in fields such as dental hygiene, where a patient's anxiety and fears can affect their willingness to seek care and maintain oral health.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://dentalhygienist-nbdhe.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!