

Ministry of Health Amendments to Oral Health Regulations in Force

On February 24, the Ministry of Health announced that the oral health regulations for dental hygienists, dental technicians, denturists and dentists were deposited with the registrar of regulations and are now in force.

Regulations are created by the government for each health profession governed under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA). Each regulation contains a scope of practice statement that describes what the profession does and how it does it, and a list of activities that outlines what members of that profession are authorized to do.

The amended regulations are in keeping with the Minister's desire to improve access to oral health services and to promote inter-professional, collaborative, team-based care and are intended to:

- align the regulations to the HPA model (characterized by two elements: shared scope of practice statements and restricted activities)
- standardize terms shared between the regulations
- clarify that unregulated persons cannot perform the restricted activities that fall under these professions (unless authorized) and ensure that colleges have the necessary authority to act when unregulated individuals provide these services

Below is a summary of key changes to the Denturists Regulation.

Denturists Regulation

- The definition of “prescription” has been changed and the College of Denturists of British Columbia (CDBC) is working collaboratively with the other oral health regulators to develop standards around the definition and requirements of an “authorization”. Until such time that CDBC advises otherwise, registrants will continue to be expected and required to ensure that prescriptions, obtained from dentists, contain a complete written description and design of the partial denture or overdenture, including any advisory regarding the oral environment or tooth structure.
- Denturists may make minor adjustments to a partial denture or overdenture, without a prescription, if it does not change the original design of the prosthesis or with consent from the prescribing dentist
- Denturists are not required to refer a patient back to the prescribing dentist for an examination after he/she has been fitted with an overdenture or partial denture
- Denturists, authorized by a prescription, may dispense a partial denture that is supported by implants and natural teeth
- The requirement for denturists to provide a prescribed service within 90 days after the prescription is issued (or 365 days with the approval of a dentist) has been removed
- Denturists may reduce a complete dislocation of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) using manual therapy, should it occur during the course of treatment
- Denturists may interpret radiographs
- Denturists may perform tooth whitening
- Denturists may provide sport mouthguards

To build understanding among all members of the dental team about how the changes affect each profession, below is a summary of key changes for dental hygienists, dental technicians and dentists.

Dental Hygienists Regulation

- 365 day rule has been removed, meaning that a dental exam is not required for dental hygiene care
- Dental hygienists may make a dental hygiene diagnosis identifying gingivitis or periodontitis as the cause of the signs or symptoms of an individual
- Dental hygienists who have the proper certification may administer local anaesthetic without a dentist on site
- Dental hygienists may initiate intra-oral radiographs for the purpose of dental hygiene care
- There is enhanced clarity related to prescription drugs (prescription from a health care professional must be documented in the chart before a registrant can administer a Schedule 1 drug). Dental hygienists working with a dentist in a traditional office setting have always been allowed to provide local anaesthetic. Existing office protocols for this would still apply under the amended regulation.
- Dental Hygienists may reduce a complete dislocation of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) using manual therapy, should it occur during the course of dental hygiene care

Dental Technicians Regulation

- The definition of a “prescription” has changed and the College of Dental Technicians of BC (CDTBC) is working collaboratively with the other oral health regulators to develop interpretive guidelines around the definition and requirements of an “authorization”
- Dental Technicians may, on receipt of a written request* from a denturist,
 - Make or alter a complete denture and provide the denture to the denturist who requested it,
 - Make or alter a partial denture or overdenture and provide the denture to the denturist who requested it, if the request is accompanied by a prescription
- A dental technician may take impressions only for the purpose of making or altering a mouthguard designed or offered for temporary protection against injury during sporting activities

NOTE: The CDTBC is working collaboratively with the College of Dental Surgeons of BC and CDBC to develop policies, standards, and guidelines to address these new aspects of practice, and the definition and requirements of “a written request”.

Dentists Regulation

- Changes to the dentists regulation were limited to the standardization of terms shared between the regulations, and do not impact the scope of practice for dentists.

Please note that regulations are hosted on the BC government's BC Laws website. As of February 27, the amendments described below are not reflected on the BC Laws website but will be shortly.

Thank you for your attention to these very important amendments and I look forward to sharing more information with you as it becomes available.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "R".

Jennifer Roff
Registrar