



Administration of Fluoride Varnish by Non-Dental Practitioners Policy

1. Background

Aboriginal¹ children have higher levels of dental decay in both their deciduous and permanent teeth compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Additionally, Aboriginal children aged five years and under have almost one and a half times the rate of hospitalisation for dental related care as compared to other Australian children. This figure is further increased when factoring in geographic remoteness.

Fluoride varnish is a valuable tool in the prevention of dental decay in both deciduous and permanent teeth. Studies have demonstrated a 25-45% reduction in the decay rate when fluoride is applied six monthly.

Fluoride varnish (sodium fluoride in alcoholic solution with natural resins) is classified as a Schedule 4 medicine through inclusion in the Schedules of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons (SUSMP). Schedule 4 of the SUSMP is adopted by reference into the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014*.

Traditionally, the application of fluoride varnish is only to be carried out by a dental practitioner. However, the SUSMP allows preparations containing fluoride that would otherwise be Schedule 4 to be exempt from scheduling provided the approval of an appropriate authority has been given. The definition of an appropriate authority (SUSMP Part 1, Interpretation) includes the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Western Australian Department of Health (WA Health).

On 7 September 2017, the Director General of WA Health approved the application of fluoride varnish 5%² by these approved health professionals in Western Australia (WA):

- Aboriginal Health Practitioners
- Aboriginal Health Workers
- Registered Nurses
- Clinical Nurses and
- Clinical Nurse Specialists-Remote Area Healthcare.

These health professionals, employed by the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), are required to be assessed and deemed competent in the mandatory training described in the Approval.

The Approval relates to the application of the fluoride varnish by the authorised health professional only and does not extend to further supply fluoride products in any other manner or for any other purpose.

¹ Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.

² Only fluoride varnish 5% approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) with specific indications listed for the prevention of caries are permitted for use in the context of fluoride varnish programs within WA Health.

2. Policy Statement

Training in fluoride varnish application must be conducted and assessed by a registered dental practitioner within a registered training organisation and comprise of the current nationally recognised units of competency.

Fluoride varnish can only be applied by the approved health professionals (listed above) who have undergone the required training and achieved competency.

Other Requirements:

- Fluoride varnish 5% must be purchased by an ACCHO holding a Health Service Permit under the Medicines and Poisons Act 2014 or by the pharmacy department of the relevant WACHS region.
- Fluoride varnish 5% must be stored in a locked cupboard or drawer, at room temperature below 25oC, with access limited to persons authorised to access Schedule 4 medicines or health professionals authorised by the Approval (listed above).
- Fluoride varnish 5% must only be applied to children aged 18 months to five years.
- Fluoride varnish 5% must not be supplied to children or their parents or carers.
- The health professional administering fluoride varnish 5% to a child must make a record that includes the child's name and address, the name, strength, dosage and quantity administered and the date of administration. The record must be kept for at least two years and must be produced for inspection at the request of the CEO or an investigator appointed under the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014*.

3. Definitions

CEO	The Director General of the WA Department of Health
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
WACHS	WA Country Health Service
Obtain	in relation to a medicine or poison, means to get or acquire
Possess	in relation to a medicine or poison, means to have in their possession
Administer	in relation to a medicine, means to give to a person/patient for immediate use
Dental Practitioner	A person registered by the Dental Board of Australia and legally able to practice within the scope of their registration as either a general dentist, dento-maxillofacial radiologist, endodontist, forensic odontologist, specialist in oral medicine, oral pathologist, oral surgeon, oral and maxillofacial surgeon, orthodontist, paediatric dentist, periodontist, prosthodontist, specialist in public health dentistry, specialist in special needs dentistry, dental hygienist, dental therapist, oral health therapist, or dental prosthetist

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Chain of custody

The table below outlines the chain of custody that tracks the journey of fluoride varnish 5% in line with the aforementioned CEO Approval and the appropriate Safety Data Sheet (SDS).

	Statement
Obtain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluoride varnish 5% is to be purchased by an ACCHO or by WACHS through a pharmacy for the specific use by a trained and accredited Aboriginal Health Practitioners, Aboriginal Health Workers, Registered Nurses, Clinical Nurses and Clinical Nurse Specialists-Remote Area Healthcare. Individual health services are to ensure a list of the trained and accredited staff is kept up to date and distributed to suppliers of fluoride varnish 5% upon request to facilitate purchase. The ordering process for fluoride varnish 5% is to align with existing WACHS and ACCHO pharmaceutical practices.
Possess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All precautions are to be taken to ensure that any product be stored in line with the appropriate SDS. Fluoride varnish 5% is to be stored by WACHS and ACCHOs in a locked cupboard/drawer with access by authorised persons only according to S4 medications procedures and the SDS (i.e. room temperature 20 to 25°C).
Administer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient records are to include the name, strength, dosage and quantity administered, as well as the date of that action. Administration of fluoride varnish 5% is to only be undertaken by approved and appropriately trained health professionals. The approved health professional administering fluoride varnish 5% is to be identifiable and to sign the record of administration.
Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WACHS and ACCHO pharmacists are to only order fluoride varnish 5% as required to minimise the need for clinics to store excess product.

4.2 Authority Scope

The table below summarises the authority scope of handling fluoride varnish 5% in the context of fluoride varnish programs. This takes into consideration the poison chain of custody and the CEO Approval for non-dental practitioners to administer fluoride varnish 5%.

	Obtain	Possess	Administer
Aboriginal Health Practitioners, Aboriginal Health Workers, Registered Nurses, Clinical Nurses and Clinical Nurse Specialists- Remote Area Healthcare meeting the eligibility criteria to administer fluoride varnish 5%		✓	✓
WACHS and ACCHO pharmacists for the specific use by Aboriginal Health Practitioners, Aboriginal Health Workers, Registered Nurses, Clinical Nurses and Clinical Nurse Specialists- Remote Area Healthcare meeting the eligibility criteria to administer fluoride varnish 5%	✓	✓	
Dental Practitioners	✓	✓	✓

All Staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

5. Compliance

It is the responsibility of the individual health professionals to ensure compliance with the above conditions and all the aspects of the Western Australian *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* and the *Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016* when handling fluoride varnish. If health professionals do not comply with the requirements of fluoride varnish program, they will be subject to the controls of the Poisons legislation.

This policy is a mandatory requirement under the Western Australian *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* and the *Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016*.

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

[Health Record Management Policy](#)

7. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out by those identified as having governance accountability of the relevant professional group in section 1 of this policy, every 12 months, by confirming that 100% of health professionals who are applying fluoride varnish 5% have undertaken the required training and achieved competence described in section 2 of this policy.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Healthcare Standards](#): 1.1-1.25, 2.3-2.10, 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.9, 4.14, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 8.7, 8.8

9. Legislation

[Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#)
[Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#)

10. References

[Chief Executive Officer Approval - Possession and Use of Fluoride Varnish](#)

11. Related Forms

[MR CH66A WACHS Fluoride Varnish Oral Health Assessment and Consent Form](#)

12. WA Health Policy Framework

[Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality Policy Framework](#)

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