



Fluoride Varnish Application Procedure

1. Guiding Principles

Aboriginal¹ children have significantly higher levels of dental decay compared to non-Aboriginal children. Aboriginal children aged five years and under have almost one and a half times the rate of hospitalisation for dental related care. In WACHS, fluoride varnish application is focused on Aboriginal children.

Dental decay is highly preventable. Fluoride varnish is a valuable tool in the prevention of dental decay in deciduous and permanent teeth. It can be applied six-monthly to children aged 18 months to 5 years.

Fluoride varnish application is to be performed only by health workers who have successfully completed the required training.

2. Procedure

Refer to:

- WACHS [Hand Hygiene Policy](#)
- OD 0657/16 [WA Health Consent to Treatment Policy](#)

A. Preparation

- a Purchase fluoride varnish (5%) using a Health Services permit under the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* or via the hospital pharmacy department.
- b Store fluoride varnish at room temperature (below 25 degrees Celsius). Access to be limited to persons authorised to administer Schedule 4 medicines.
- c Gather equipment and materials:
 - Colgate® Duraphat Fluoride Varnish
 - Dispensing pad showing 0.25mL measurement
 - Soft manual toothbrush
 - Disposable micro brush
 - Gauze
 - Head lamp or pen torch
 - Clean paper towel and neutral detergent wipes
 - MR CH66A WACHS Child Health Fluoride Varnish Oral Health Assessment and Consent Form.

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.

B. Obtain informed consent form from parent/guardian

- a Inform parent/carer that the procedure is very effective in preventing decay by releasing fluoride over a number of hours. Reassure that it is quick and easy to apply and does not cause any pain. Children tolerate the taste well.
- b Gain consent from parent/carer on the MR CH66A WACHS Child Health Fluoride varnish Oral Health Assessment and Consent Form.
- c Show the parent/carer the correct tooth brushing technique and food choices to reduce tooth decay.

C. Check child's medical history

- a Fluoride varnish cannot be applied if the child:
 - has been treated for acute asthma in the past week
 - has been recently hospitalised due to an allergic reaction
 - is obviously unwell, including signs of a cold, flu or chicken pox
 - has sores in the mouth, e.g. ulcers and cold sores
 - has had an allergic reaction to fluoride varnish
 - has had fluoride varnish applied less than 6 months ago
 - has just brushed their teeth with a fluoride toothpaste.

D. Set up seating and environment

- a Assist children to feel comfortable and happy. Use a soft toy to distract the child during the procedure, if desired.
- b Set up seating to ensure there is a clear view of the child's mouth and teeth.
 - Sit child on their parent/carer's lap facing you, or lay the child on your lap in a 'knee to knee' position with the help of the parent/carer so the child is facing the parent.
 - Older children can sit on a chair facing you.

E. Inspect the teeth and mouth

- a Prepare yourself.
 - Wash hands or use hand sanitiser.
 - Put on head lamp and disposable gloves.
- b Using the head lamp or pen torch, observe inside the mouth by retracting the lips and cheeks. Look at which teeth are present and check for any obvious signs of decay.
 - Children usually start erupting deciduous teeth at approximately 6 months of age.
 - By 3 years of age children usually have 20 deciduous teeth.
 - Permanent teeth begin to erupt at 6 years of age.
 - Healthy teeth are intact and do not cause pain.

Document findings on the MR CH66A WACHS Child Health Fluoride varnish Oral Health Assessment and Consent Form.

F. Perform fluoride varnish application:

- a Clean the teeth using a wet toothbrush or wipe teeth clean with gauze. **Do not** use toothpaste as the fluoride varnish will not stick.
- b Dry the top back teeth gently with gauze on one side of the mouth.
- c Isolate these teeth (if possible) with gauze to help keep the tongue and cheeks away. Fluoride varnish dries quickly on contact with saliva.
- d Apply fluoride varnish thinly to the teeth using a disposable micro brush. Repeat on the other side of the mouth.
- e Start with the top back teeth on both sides, followed by the top front teeth. Apply fluoride varnish to the lower teeth using the same sequence.
- f Wipe off any excess fluoride varnish present on lips, tongue and cheeks using gauze.
- g Work efficiently to apply fluoride varnish to all teeth. Never use more than the prescribed amount of 0.25mL.
- h If a child becomes upset or shuts the mouth, try to apply fluoride varnish to as many teeth as possible, before discontinuing.
- i **Do not** give the child the toothbrush to hold post application as they will have a tendency to place it into their mouth and brush off the fluoride varnish.

G. Post procedural instructions for parents

- a For best result of fluoride varnish application leave teeth undisturbed for as long as possible.
 - Do not brush teeth for 4 hours.
 - Avoid chewing hard foods for 4 hours.
 - Water and soft foods are allowed.
- b Teeth may look yellow but will return to normal after tooth brushing and eating.
- c Fluoride varnish needs to be reapplied every 6 months.
- d Contact clinic immediately in the event of an emergency.
- e Remind parents about preventing tooth decay by regular tooth brushing, eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and avoiding sugary foods.

H. Documentation in the client record

- a Medical history
- b Teeth present
- c Signs of decay, or pain
- d Teeth applied with fluoride varnish
- e Child behaviour, if relevant
- f Post procedural instructions given to parent/carer
- g Medical emergencies and reactions to fluoride varnish application
- h Oral hygiene and dental education provided.

3. Definitions

Fluoride varnish	Sodium fluoride in alcohol solution with natural resins. It is a Schedule 4 medicine.
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff authorised to apply fluoride varnish must adhere to this procedure and WACHS Administration of Fluoride Varnish by Non-Dental Practitioners Policy.

5. Compliance

In September 2017, the Director General of the Western Australian Department of Health approved the application of fluoride varnish 5%² by approved health professionals in Western Australia (WA). 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.

Approved health professionals, employed by the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) or Aboriginal Medical/Health Services, are required to be assessed and deemed competent in the mandatory training described in the Approval and roles include:

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

Failure to comply with this procedure 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

All WACHS clinical records must be managed in accordance with [Health Record Management Policy](#).

7. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out by service managers on a regular basis, by observing staff implementing the procedure.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)

Clinical Governance Standard 2.1

Partnering with Consumers, 5.1 & 5.3

9. Legislation

[Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#)

[Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#)

10. Related Forms

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

11. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Administration of Fluoride Varnish by Non-Dental Practitioners Policy](#)

WACHS [Hand Hygiene Policy](#)

12. Related WA Health System Policies

OD 0657/16 [WA Health Consent to Treatment Policy](#)

13. Policy Framework

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

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
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