

Dental Council position on the application of Silver diamine fluoride by oral health practitioners

1. The topical application of Silver diamine fluoride (SDF) to teeth is available in New Zealand for the prevention of dental caries progressing, treatment for dental caries and management of dentine hypersensitivity.
2. The management of any disorder or condition/ disease of the oral cavity and associated facial structures that “involves surgical or operative procedures below the gingival margin or the surface of the skin, mucous membranes or teeth” is a restricted activity that can only be performed by a registered oral health practitioner¹
3. The topical application of SDF to manage a carious lesion is considered management of a disease below the surface of the teeth and is a restricted activity that falls within the practice of the oral health professions specified in the table below.
4. The topical application of SDF by unregistered persons is not permitted.
5. Internationally, SDF is predominantly used for caries management. Sodium fluoride or other techniques remain suitable and available alternatives for prevention and caries treatment.
6. Where caries is present, including non-cavitated lesions, the long-term management of caries disease must be considered to inform the treatment plan, especially for permanent teeth. Oral health practitioners can only perform this activity if it falls within their scope of practice.
7. Given that SDF permanently stains any caries lesion, identifying the presence of caries is essential to inform the decision whether SDF is an appropriate treatment option. The absence of pulpal involvement is also required for the use of SDF.
8. Diagnosis and management of dental caries are outside the scope of practice of dental hygienists. Additional learning is required for oral health therapists and dental therapists to enable caries management of adult patients.
9. Ensuring informed consent by the patient is critical for the use of SDF.
10. Because this is a new treatment option within New Zealand, ensuring competence in the use of the product is required. A useful resource is the [*Guidance on the use of Silver Diamine Fluoride in Aotearoa New Zealand*](#).
11. Within this context, SDF may be applied by oral health practitioners in the following scopes of practice:

¹ Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (Restricted Activities) Order 2005.

Role	Application of SDF
Dentist and dental specialists	Can apply SDF for prevention, management of dental caries and dentine hypersensitivity
Oral health therapist	Can apply SDF for prevention, management of dental caries and dentine hypersensitivity as detailed below
Patient <18 years	Can apply as per scope of practice
Patient >18 years Adult restorative care exclusion on scope of practice	No caries present: Can apply for prevention and dentine hypersensitivity as per scope of practice Presence of any caries: Can apply under direction of a qualified oral health practitioner.
Patient >18 years No Adult restorative care exclusion on scope of practice	Can apply as per scope of practice
Dental therapist	Can apply SDF for prevention and management of dental caries as detailed below
Patient <18 years	Can apply as per scope of practice
Patient >18 years No Adult care scope of practice	Can apply under direction of a qualified oral health practitioner
Patient >18 years Adult care scope of practice	Can apply as per scope of practice
Dental hygienist	Can apply under direction of a qualified oral health practitioner.

A qualified oral health practitioner that can offer direction for the application of SDF is a:

- Dentist/dental specialist
- Oral health therapist with no adult restorative exclusion on their scope of practice
- Dental therapist registered with adult care.