



## **Guidelines for Tooth Whitening**

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Dental Hygienists (NLCDH) will look to other Canadian jurisdictions to observe best practice guidelines and policies which impact the dental hygiene profession in our province, while maintaining the integrity of the NLCDH Scope of Practice. The NLCDH graciously acknowledges support from the College of Dental Hygienists of Manitoba in adapting their practice guidelines concerning tooth whitening procedures for dental hygienists.

### Practice Guidelines

Current research supports the safety and efficacy of most tooth whitening procedures, while at the same time identifies a risk of adverse effects on the oral tissues. There are many types whitening products available today, including professionally applied gels, light or heat activated gels, and over-the-counter whitening agents. The risk of adverse effects increases when used with inadequate knowledge of the product and/or procedure. Accordingly professional application and monitoring ensure the best and safest results. Health Canada classifies tooth whitening products as cosmetic, therefore it is not considered a reserved act and any person can perform tooth whitening procedures in any setting at home or in a professional practice.

Dental hygienists are regulated health professionals that have the opportunity to provide safe and effective tooth whitening to their clients as well as offering any related information to the public.

Presently, there is not sufficient evidence to support the safety and efficacy of lasers for tooth whitening. Therefore laser use in tooth whitening remains prohibited for dental hygienists.

As is generally expected for regulated professionals, Registered Dental Hygienists (RDH) abide by a professional Code of Ethics which supports the principle of accountability:

“dental hygienists practise within the bounds of their competence, scope of practice, personal and/or professional limitations.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Dental Hygienists Association, 2012, *Dental Hygienists' Code of Ethics* pp.8  
[http://www.cdha.ca/pdfs/Profession/Resources/Code\\_of\\_Ethics\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.cdha.ca/pdfs/Profession/Resources/Code_of_Ethics_EN_web.pdf)

Dental hygienists must have the appropriate education to perform in-office and take home whitening procedures. As per the NLCDH Practice Standards, the dental hygienist will use the Assessment, Diagnosis, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation process of care. This should include using the most current evidence-based research, abiding by the manufacturer's instructions, educating the patient on all risks and benefits of treatment. Following the dental hygienist's assessment, the dental hygienist may consult with the client's dentist or any other designated health professional within the circle of care to determine if the treatment is in agreement with the client's overall oral health treatment plan.

### References

The NLCDH Practice Standards 2013.

The Dental Hygienist:

#51: applies knowledge of whitening techniques and related products.

#52: fabricates whitening trays.

#56: applies principles of risk management for client health and safety (eg. Universal precautions, considering latex allergies, etc.).

#64: uses materials and equipment according to manufacturer's specifications.

*The Health Professions Act, 2010*

<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/h01-02.htm>

*Dental Hygienists Regulations, 2013*

<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/Regulations/rc130054.htm>

This Practice Guideline reflects current knowledge and is subject to periodic review and revisions with on-going research.

**Approved by the NLCDH May 3, 2017.**