



Nova Scotia Regulator of
Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology,
and Denturism

NOVA SCOTIA REGULATOR OF DENTAL HYGIENE, DENTAL TECHNOLOGY, & DENTURISM

Education & Authorization Requirements & Practice Standard for Local Anaesthetic Administration by Dental Hygienists

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Introduction

In Nova Scotia, the administration of local anaesthetic is considered an additional practice competency¹ that requires authorization from the NSRDHDTD Registrar prior to a dental hygienist being able to perform this procedure.

Registrants of the NSRDHDTD who hold a practising licence may apply to the Registrar to have their local anaesthetic credentials recognized by the NSRDHDTD. Once a registrant has received that recognition, they may administer local anaesthetic as part of their dental hygiene practice, under the conditions set out in these Standards.

Section 1 of this document sets out the NSRDHDTD local anaesthetic educational and authorization requirements, as approved by the NSRDHDTD Board. These requirements are based on the education of the registrant in local anaesthesia, the length of time which has passed since the registrant has received that education, and/or the length of time that has passed since the registrant has practiced the competency or skill.

Section 2 includes the practice standards that dental hygienists must follow when administering local anaesthetic. This Standard is in addition to the general Code of Ethics and Practice Standards approved for Nova Scotia dental hygienists. All the foundational requirements, such as obtaining informed consent and following health privacy laws, must still be followed. This document provides additional guidance on local anaesthetic administration. It is meant to support, not replace, the professional judgment that dental hygienists make in specific situations.

Section 1. Local Anaesthetic Education and Authorization Requirements

Education & Credential Recognition

Applicants or practising registrants may apply for recognition of their local anaesthesia credentials if they have completed a course in local anaesthesia that meets the criteria approved by the NSRDHDTD Board. See **Schedule A**.

Application for Authorization to Administer Local Anaesthesia

The information required as part of an application for authorization may vary depending on the length of time that has lapsed since the applicant completed the local anaesthetic educational program, and whether the program has been previously reviewed to determine equivalence.

¹ (a) “additional practice competency” means an advanced practice that
(i) has been identified by the Board as necessitating additional education, training or other requirements beyond those identified in practice standards, and
(ii) requires approval of the Registrar before a registrant may engage in the advanced practice

Applicants should refer to Categories A, B and C of this Policy and the application form to determine the required documentation.

General Timeline for Review of Applications

If an application is complete, the local anaesthetic program is approved, and the registrant meets the currency of practice criteria set out in this Policy, the NSRDHDTT will generally provide notification of authorization to the applicant within 7 to 10 working days of receipt of the application.

Courses or programs that are not currently on the approved list will have to be reviewed. Detailed course information (i.e., course outline, schedule, course syllabus, course manual) must accompany the application. After all required documents are received, applicants should expect a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks for review. The NSRDHDTT will do the best it can to process applications in an expedient fashion. If the information provided with the application is incomplete or additional information is required, the process may take longer. **Applicants must determine which of the following Policy Sections (A, B or C) applies to their situation and proceed accordingly.**

Categories for Credential Recognition

Registrants applying for recognition of local anaesthesia (LA) credentials must provide the following, based on the time elapsed since program completion:

Category A. *If the applicant completed a local anaesthetic course 0 - 36 months prior to the date of application for authorization to administer local anaesthetic, the application must proceed as follows:*

Documentation to be submitted to the NSRDHDTT:

- Completed application form.
- Evidence (as specified on the application form) of successful completion of appropriate education.
 - *Please note:* If you completed local anaesthesia education in your undergraduate program and the DH program transcript is already on file with the NSRDHDTT, you will not be required to submit it again.
- Evidence of CPR certification. The level of CPR certification required for initial registration and annual renewal of a practising licence is sufficient. The course must have been completed within the last twelve months. Applicants may be asked to provide a photocopy of their current CPR certification/card if it is not already on file.

How applications are handled:

- Each application will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- The Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee may ask for additional information to verify education in this area. This could include detailed course outlines, syllabi, workbooks, manuals, summaries of your experience, practical and theoretical evaluations, or any related clinical upgrades or extra training you completed since finishing the course.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee **is** satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate local anaesthesia education, the applicant **will** be authorized.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee is **not** satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate education in local anaesthesia, the applicant **will not** be

authorized, and the applicant will be required to successfully complete an approved local anaesthesia education prior to re-applying for authorization.

- An application for authorization may be refused or deferred if the applicant is the subject of investigation or discipline related to professional misconduct, incompetence, conduct unbecoming, or incapacity in any jurisdiction.

Category B. *If the applicant completed a local anaesthetic course **more than 36 months, but not more than 72 months** prior to the date of application for authorization to administer local anaesthesia, the application must proceed as follows:*

Documentation to be submitted to the NSRDHDT:

- Completed application form.
- Evidence (as specified on the application form) of successful completion of appropriate education.
 - *Please note:* If you completed local anaesthesia education in your undergraduate program and the DH program transcript is already on file with the NSRDHDT, you will not be required to submit it again.
- Evidence of CPR certification. The level of CPR certification required for initial registration and annual renewal of a practising licence is sufficient. The course must have been completed within the last twelve months. Applicants may be asked to provide a photocopy of their current CPR certification/card if it is not already on file.
- Evidence of currency in administration of local anaesthesia while the applicant was previously authorized (e.g., employer verification) OR
- Successful completion of a Board-approved refresher course if there is no evidence of currency.

How applications are handled:

- The Registrar will review and verify the submitted documentation, referring cases to the Registration and Licensing Committee, as necessary.
- Each application will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- The Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee may ask for additional information to verify education in this area. This could include detailed course outlines, syllabi, workbooks, manuals, summaries of your experience, practical and theoretical evaluations, or any related clinical upgrades or extra training you completed since finishing the course.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee is satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate education in local anaesthesia, and there is evidence of currency in LA administration, the applicant **will** be authorized.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee determines substantial equivalency of the local anaesthesia course, program or module, but more than 36 months have elapsed since the applicant last administered local anaesthesia on a regular basis, the applicant will be required to:
 - Successfully complete a Board “approved” local anaesthesia program (*a refresher course will not qualify*) prior to being considered for recognition of local anaesthesia credentials.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee **is not** satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate education in local anaesthesia, the applicant **will not** be authorized, and the applicant will be required to successfully complete an approved local anaesthetic dental hygiene education program prior to re-applying for authorization.

- An application for authorization may be refused or deferred if the applicant is the subject of investigation or discipline related to professional misconduct, incompetence, conduct unbecoming, or incapacity in any jurisdiction.

Category C. *If the applicant completed a local anaesthetic course **more than 72 months** prior to the date of application for authorization to administer local anaesthetic, the application must proceed as follows:*

Documentation to be submitted to the NSRDHDT:

- Completed application form.
- Evidence (as specified on the application form) of successful completion of appropriate education.
 - *Please note:* If you completed local anaesthetic education in your undergraduate program and the DH program transcript is already on file with the NSRDHDT, you will not be required to submit it again.
- Evidence of CPR certification. The level of CPR certification required for initial registration and annual renewal of a practising licence is sufficient. The course must have been completed within the last twelve months. Applicants may be asked to provide a photocopy of their current CPR certification/card if it is not already on file.
- Evidence of currency in administration of local anaesthesia (e.g., employer verification)

How applications are handled:

- The Registrar will review and verify the submitted documentation, referring cases to the Registration and Licensing Committee, as necessary.
- Each application will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- The Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee may ask for additional information to verify education in this area. This could include detailed course outlines, syllabi, workbooks, manuals, summaries of your experience, practical and theoretical evaluations, or any related clinical upgrades or extra training you completed since finishing the course.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee is satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate education in local anaesthesia, and there is evidence of currency in LA administration, the applicant **will** be authorized.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee determines substantial equivalency of the local anaesthesia course, program or module, but more than 36 months have elapsed since the applicant last administered local anaesthesia on a regular basis, the applicant will be required to:
 - Successfully complete a Council “approved” local anaesthesia program (*a refresher course will not qualify*) prior to being considered for recognition of local anaesthesia credentials.
- If the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee **is not** satisfied that the applicant has received appropriate education in local anaesthesia, the applicant **will not** be authorized, and the applicant will be required to successfully complete an approved local anaesthetic dental hygiene education prior to re-applying for authorization.
- An application for authorization may be refused or deferred if the applicant is the subject of investigation or discipline related to professional misconduct, incompetence, conduct unbecoming, or incapacity in any jurisdiction.

Registrar Decision-Making and Review of Decisions

Where the Registrar is not satisfied that the applicant meets the criteria set by the Board with respect to the applicable Category Section, the Registrar may refuse the application or may refer the matter to the Registration and Licensing Committee.

If the Registrar refuses the application, the applicant may request that the Registration and Licensing Review Committee review the Registrar's decisions. The individual must provide notice in writing to the Registrar to this effect within 30 days of the Registrar's decision.

Where the applicant requests the opportunity to appear before the Registration and Licensing Review within the 30-day timeframe, this request must be granted.

The Registration and Licensing Review Committee shall consider the eligibility of the applicant and may authorize or refuse the application. The decision of the Registration and Licensing Review Committee is final.

Section 2. Practice Standard for Local Anaesthetic Administration by Dental Hygienists

A registrant must be authorized by the NSRDHDTD in order to engage in local anaesthetic administration.

Local anaesthetic administration by dental hygienists is an essential component of safe and effective client care. When authorized and appropriately educated, dental hygienists can manage pain and enhance client comfort during procedures. This contributes to the delivery of high-quality, client-centered care by enabling more thorough and efficient treatment. Moreover, dental hygienists' ability to administer local anaesthetic helps streamline workflows within the oral health care team, reducing the need for additional appointments or reliance on other practitioners for anaesthesia delivery. This enhances interprofessional collaboration, optimizes clinical efficiency, and promotes timely, coordinated care. The inclusion of this skill within the dental hygienist's scope of practice aligns with regulatory objectives aimed at improving access to comprehensive and integrated oral health services.

Dental hygienists must adhere to established practice standards and guidelines when administering local anaesthetic to ensure client safety, uphold professional accountability, and maintain public trust.

Accountability and Clinical Judgment

- Dental hygienists are accountable for determining the appropriateness of administering local anaesthetic in each client case.
- Consultation and collaboration with other healthcare professional must occur when clinical concerns or contraindications are identified.
- A complete assessment of the client must be conducted prior to administration.
- The dental hygienist is accountable for judging the appropriateness of administering local anaesthesia, including consulting and collaborating with other members of the interprofessional team, as necessary. For example, when developing a plan to administer local anaesthetic, if a potential contraindication or concern is identified, the dental hygienist must follow up with the appropriate healthcare professional prior to implementation.

Competence and Professional Support

- Dental hygienists must recognize and practise within their level of competence.
- Newly graduated dental hygienists must consider if they need additional professional support when administering local anaesthetic (e.g., an experienced dental hygienist or dentist on-site to assist).
- Ongoing competency must be maintained through continued education and clinical experience.

Implementation — Local Anaesthetic Administration Procedure

Dental hygienists authorized by the Registrar to administer local anaesthetic are responsible for:

- Determining the appropriate type of injection, anaesthetic agent, and dosage based on the individual client's needs and standards of practice.
- Administering local anaesthetic according to NSRDHDTD Standards, including correct technique and dosage.
- Evaluating the client's medical history and ensuring no contraindications are present before administering the anaesthetic.
- Ensuring that appropriate emergency protocols are in place, including knowledge of the emergency kit and procedures for managing any adverse reactions.
- Coordinating with other healthcare professionals, such as dentists, when necessary, to ensure client safety and effective treatment.
- Monitoring the client's response to the anaesthetic during and after the procedure to ensure no complications arise.

Client Care and Post-Procedure Responsibilities

- Monitor client response during and after administration.
- Provide clear and appropriate post-operative instructions to the client.
- Be prepared to manage adverse reactions or medical emergencies.

Documentation and Recordkeeping

Documentation must be accurate, complete, and up to date. Client records must include:

- A complete medical (health) and dental history.
- Details of the anaesthetic administered, including:
 - Type of anaesthetic and any vasoconstrictor used.
 - Type and location of injection(s) (e.g., mandibular block, quadrant 3).
 - Dosage (e.g., 1.8 ml).
- Client's response to local anaesthetic and any adverse reactions.
 - Any treatment provided in response to an adverse reaction must be clearly documented, including the nature of the reaction, actions taken, and client outcome.
- Post-operative instructions provided.

Facility and Equipment Requirements

The practice where the dental hygienist is administering local anaesthetic (e.g., dental and dental hygiene practice) must maintain:

- A written emergency protocol.

- An emergency kit with required medications and supplies.
- Suction equipment capable of aspirating oral and pharyngeal contents.
- A portable oxygen delivery system with face masks and bag-valve mask for positive pressure ventilation.
- A sphygmomanometer (blood pressure cuff) and stethoscope or equivalent monitoring device.

Authorization and Regulatory Requirements for Dental Hygienists

Dental hygienists must:

- Hold a valid NSRDHDTD practising licence.
 - Obtain NSRDHDTD authorization to administer local anaesthetic.
 - Display their NSRDHDTD Local Anaesthesia Certificate publicly in the practice environment.
 - Maintain current knowledge of protocols for managing medical emergencies within the office setting.
 - Maintain up-to-date knowledge on the local anaesthetic administration and use of and indications for local anaesthetic reversal agents.
 - Ensure compliance with all NSRDHDTD standards, policies, and scope of practice expectations related to local anaesthetic administration.
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Section 3. Document History

First approved by the CDHNS on April 15, 2025, for circulation to registrants for consultation.

Following the consultation period, the final version will be approved by the CDHNS Council to come into effect when the CDHNS transitions to the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)* later in 2025. The Initial Board for the NSRDHDTD must subsequently approve this Standard, upon migration.

Approximate date of next review: 2029

Section 4. References

1. Alberta College of Dental Hygienists (ACDH). *Administration of Local Anaesthetic*. Available at: <https://www.acdh.ca/standards-and-guidelines/project/administration-of-local-anaesthesia>
2. American Dental Association (ADA). *Guidelines on local anaesthetic reversal agents*. Available at: www.ada.org
3. American Dental Association (ADA) Commission on Dental Accreditation. Available at: www.ada.org

4. American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) *Physical Status Classification System*. Available at: www.asahq.org
5. College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia (CDHNS). (2024). *CDHNS Oral Anaesthetic Policy Statement*. Bedford, NS.
6. College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia (CDHNS). (2017). *Written Care Directive*. Bedford, NS.
7. Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC). Available at: www.cda-adc.ca
8. Federation of Dental Hygiene Regulators of Canada (FDHRC) (2021). *Entry-to-Practice Canadian Competencies for Dental Hygienists*. Available at: https://www.fdhrc.ca/sites/files/EPCCoDH_FDHR November_2021.pdf
9. Malamed, S. (2019). *Handbook of Local Anesthesia* (7th Ed.)
10. Pieren, J. A., & Gadbury-Amyot, C. (2024). *Dental hygiene: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Elsevier. Chapter III: Assessments and Chapter V: Pain and anxiety control.

Schedule A: Local Anaesthesia (LA) Educational Criteria

Requirements	
1. Theoretical course content must include:	Concepts of pain and anxiety control
	Head/neck/oral anatomy
	Neuroanatomy/physiology
	Pharmacology of anaesthetics
	Pharmacology of vasoconstrictors
	Local and systemic complications/emergencies
	Pre-anaesthetic patient evaluation
	Armamentarium
	Injection techniques
	Alternate methods and techniques
2. Pre-clinical and clinical course content must include:	Supraperiosteal Infiltration
	Anterior Superior Alveolar Nerve Block (ASA) and Middle Superior Nerve (MSA) Block OR Infraorbital Nerve Block (IO)
	Posterior Superior Alveolar nerve Block (PSA)
	Greater Palatine Nerve Block (GP)
	Nasopalatine Nerve Block (NP)
	Inferior Alveolar Nerve Block, with Lingual & Buccal Nerve Blocks (I/A)
	Mental with Incisive Nerve Block (M/I)
	Gow-Gates Nerve Block (Not necessary for approval)
3. There must be evidence that course participants receive sufficient experiences in both the pre-clinical and clinical settings to attain competence.	
4. The course is delivered as a component of a dental	4.1 An accredited faculty of dentistry, dental hygiene, or dental therapy undergraduate program, <i>or</i>

Requirements	
hygiene, dental therapy, or dental undergraduate program, or as a continuing education course delivered by:	4.2 Continuing education programs which the Registrar or Registration and Licensing Committee deem substantially equivalent to a Board approved faculty of dentistry/dental hygiene/dental therapy sponsored course and is:
	<p>4.2.1 Organized and taught by oral health practitioners who are registered/licensed² in good standing and authorized to administer LA in the jurisdiction where they hold registration/licensure, and</p> <p>4.2.2 Held in a properly equipped dental environment which will permit the course participants to use the techniques being taught to achieve an acceptable entry-level of competence for the performance of LA procedures.</p>
5. There must be evidence of an appropriate process for evaluation in both the theoretical and clinical components of the course.	
6. Course providers must issue evidence of successful completion of the LA course (e.g., transcript from dental hygiene program, certificate of completion from continuing education).	

² Persons teaching clinical courses in Nova Scotia must be a registered with the appropriate provincial regulatory authority (e.g., NSRDHDTD or the Nova Scotia Regulatory of Dentistry and Dental Assisting, NSRDDA)