

facts: About



Fluoride Varnish Information for Parents and Caregivers

Why do we recommend putting fluoride varnish on children's teeth?

Tooth decay is one of the most common preventable diseases seen in children. Children from low income families and those covered by Medicaid are more likely to have early or urgent dental needs compared to those from middle or higher income families. Children as young as 12 to 18 months can get cavities. Cavities in baby teeth can cause pain and even prevent children from being able to eat, speak, sleep and learn properly. Children do not lose all their baby teeth until they are about 11 or 12 years old.

What is fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish is painted on teeth to help prevent cavities and to help stop small cavities that have already started. It is the only type of fluoride treatment the American Dental Association recommends for children under age 6 years.

Is fluoride varnish safe?

Yes, fluoride varnish can be used on babies from the time they have their first teeth. Only a very small amount of fluoride varnish is used.

How is it put on the teeth?

The varnish is painted on the teeth and it sets fast when saliva touches it. It is quick and easy to apply and does not have a bad taste. There is no pain, but your child may cry because babies and children don't like having things put in their mouths especially by people they don't know.

How often should your child get fluoride varnish painted on his teeth?

The American Dental Association recommends that fluoride varnish be applied every 3-6 months. In Ohio, children covered by Medicaid can have fluoride varnish applied every 180 days.



What do you do after a fluoride varnish treatment?

- ❖ Your child should eat a soft, non-abrasive diet for the rest of the day. No pretzels, apples, celery or carrots.
- ❖ Do not brush or floss until the next morning. By leaving the varnish on the teeth overnight, the fluoride is slowly absorbed into the tooth surface.
- ❖ Your child's teeth may not be white and shiny until the next day when the varnish is brushed off.

Baby Teeth are Important!

They:

- ❖ Let your child chew food.
- ❖ Help with jaw and facial formation.
- ❖ Aid in speech development.
- ❖ Add to your baby's good health.
- ❖ Guide the permanent teeth into place.
- ❖ Make a pretty smile!

Brush Up on Healthy Teeth

Simple Steps for Kids' Smiles



*Start
cleaning
teeth early.*

- As soon as the first tooth appears, begin cleaning by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day.
- When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush.
- Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when your child is 2 years old.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride before age 2 if your child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

*Use the right
amount of fluoride
toothpaste.*

- Use only a small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a pea). *Fluoride is important for fighting cavities. But if children younger than 6 years old swallow too much fluoride, their permanent teeth may have white spots.*
- Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and to rinse well after brushing.

*Supervise
brushing.*

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone.
- Continue to closely watch brushing to make sure the child is doing a good job and using only a small amount of toothpaste.

*Talk to
your child's
doctor or
dentist.*

- Ask the doctor or dentist about your child's specific fluoride needs.
Children older than 6 months may need extra fluoride if the drinking water does not have enough.
Children younger than 6 years old should not use a fluoride mouth rinse unless recommended by a doctor or dentist.
- After age 2, most children get the right amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities if they drink water that contains fluoride and brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

**Early care for your children's teeth will
protect their smile and their health.**

