

Fluoride Varnish Treatments and Your Child

What is fluoride varnish?

- A protective coating painted on the surfaces of teeth.
- A dental treatment that **prevents and slows tooth decay** (cavities).

How does fluoride varnish help teeth?

- Fluoride makes teeth stronger and more resistant to cavities.
- Fluoride varnish works with saliva to protect tooth enamel from plaque and sugar.
- Fluoride varnish, a professionally applied topical fluoride, prevents new cavities from forming and can slow down or stop decay from getting worse.

Is it safe to get a fluoride varnish?

- It is quick, easy, and safe for children of all ages.
- It does not hurt.
- A very small amount is used. Almost no fluoride is swallowed.
- Fluoride varnish is safe to use, even if your child gets fluoride from other sources, such as drinking water, toothpaste, or formula.

When should children get fluoride varnish applied?

- Children should get the fluoride varnish when their baby teeth start to appear and through their first five years. Talk to your child's doctor about the timing and frequency for fluoride varnish application.

To protect the fluoride covering after varnish is applied:

- It is okay to eat and drink warm (not hot) or cold liquids and soft foods right away after the treatment.
- Sticky or crunchy foods should be avoided for the next 24 hours.
- Teeth should not be brushed or flossed for the next 24 hours.

What to expect after a fluoride varnish treatment:

- Teeth may look a little yellow or dull for the next 24-48 hours.
- Your child's teeth will still need regular brushing, flossing, and dental checkups.

Why is my doctor/health clinic using fluoride varnish?

- Your doctor cares about your child’s overall health – including their mouth and teeth!
- Kids routinely see their doctor, especially when they are young.
- While children should get regular dental checkups, your doctor will check the mouth for problems and provide fluoride varnish to keep teeth healthy in between visits. This is part of your child’s insurance benefit and is there is no charge to you. Your doctor will refer you to a dentist if you don’t have one and ask about your child’s oral health care habits.

Minnesota Department of Health
Child and Teen Checkups
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-3650
health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us

11/2023

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3650.