

Fluoride Varnish Information

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that is needed for healthy teeth. Humans need some in the diet, and applying it to the teeth also helps prevent tooth decay.

What is fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish is a gel that is painted on your child's teeth to protect them from tooth decay and cavities. It keeps your child's teeth healthy. Fluoride is needed for teeth to develop properly and to be strong and healthy.

Why do we use fluoride varnish?

Regular varnish use has been shown to help prevent tooth decay and cavities and keep teeth healthy in children who are at high risk of tooth decay. Even baby teeth need to be kept healthy. Decay of baby teeth can cause pain, problems eating and with speech, infections, and can require surgery. Baby teeth are not completely lost until 12 or 13 years old and need to be kept healthy. Problems with baby teeth can also cause problems with adult teeth coming in.

Why are pediatricians applying varnish?

Although the recommended age of first dental visit is at 12 months, many parents are not aware of this recommendation, and many have a hard time finding a dentist who sees toddlers. Since young children see pediatricians frequently, they can easily add this necessary treatment to well child care.

Is fluoride varnish safe?

Yes, it is safe even in babies. Varnish hardens on the teeth and very little is swallowed. Only a small amount is used.

How much does it cost?

It is covered by most insurance plans. Any patient amount will not exceed \$20.

How is it done?

The teeth are inspected for problems. The teeth are quickly dried and varnish painted on with a small brush. It is very quick and even toddlers don't seem to mind, probably because they can taste the varnish and it tastes good. It does not hurt or taste bad; if a child cries, it is just because they don't like being held still or are scared.

What do I do after varnish is applied?

Your child can eat and drink right away. Avoid hot foods and drinks for 4-6 hours. Avoid crunchy foods like chips for 4-6 hours. Don't brush your child's teeth until the next morning. Your child's teeth may look yellow or dull after the varnish is applied; this will go away when you brush your child's teeth.

How often is it used?

It is recommended that children have varnish applied every 3-6 months.