

Fluoride Varnish

Frequently Asked Questions

What is fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish is a professionally applied treatment that can help protect teeth from cavities. It can help cavities from getting worse that are in their earliest stages. Fluoride varnish can be applied either at a doctor's or dentist's office.

Is fluoride varnish safe?

Yes, fluoride varnish (and fluoride toothpaste) is safe to use, starting when the first teeth erupt. Only a small amount is used during a single fluoride varnish application. Allergies or sensitivities to fluoride varnish are rare.

Why is fluoride varnish recommended for children's teeth?

Tooth decay, or cavities, is the most common chronic childhood disease. A small cavity can have a big impact on a child's life and development.

Cavities start when certain foods and drinks interact with the bacteria in our mouths. The more frequently this happens, the more likely cavities will form.

Teeth have an outer layer called enamel. In children's teeth, the enamel is thinner than adult teeth. Therefore, cavities can start and get worse more quickly. Fluoride helps to prevent or slow this process.

Cavities in baby teeth can interfere with speech, eating and cause pain and infection. Dental pain and infection can affect sleep schedules and a child's ability to focus.

How often should your child get fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish can be applied when the first tooth erupts. It can be applied up to 4 times a year or once every 3 months. Insurance plans might limit how often it is covered, but most will cover fluoride varnish 2 times a year.

How is fluoride varnish put on the teeth?

The liquid-like solution is painted on dry teeth with a tooth-sized paint brush. Saliva in the mouth causes the varnish to stick to the teeth. The procedure is easy, fast and painless. Some children may not like the procedure or sticky feeling.

What do you do after a fluoride varnish treatment?

Children should avoid hot foods and liquids that would dissolve the varnish. Otherwise, normal eating and drinking are ok.

Do not brush or floss your child's teeth until the next morning, using their current toothbrush. After that, you should use a new toothbrush.

Teeth may appear yellow after fluoride varnish is applied but that color is temporary. The teeth will return to normal after toothbrushing the next morning.