

INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

DENTAL CARIES ARE THE MOST COMMON CHRONIC DISEASE IN CHILDHOOD, 5 TIMES MORE COMMON THAN ASTHMA

ORAL HEALTH IS VITAL TO OVERALL HEALTH

FLUORIDE VARNISHING CAN HELP TO PREVENT OR SLOW TOOTH DECAY

ORAL HEALTH AND FLUORIDE VARNISH – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: What is *Fluoride Varnish*?

Answer: Fluoride varnish is a topical fluoride used to prevent tooth decay. Fluoridated toothpaste is another type of topical fluoride. Both are used on the surface of teeth.

Question: How is *Fluoride Varnish* applied?

Answer: A small piece of gauze is used to clean and dry the teeth. The varnish is painted onto the front and back, top and bottom of the teeth with a tiny brush. It forms a sticky covering over the tooth and becomes hard as soon as saliva in the mouth touches it. It takes less than 2 minutes to varnish the teeth.



Question: Will *Fluoride Varnish* make the teeth look different?

Answer: Some brands of fluoride varnish coat the teeth with a yellow film. Other brands are white and may make the teeth look dull. This is normal and does not hurt the teeth. When the varnish comes off the next morning when the teeth are brushed, the teeth will be white and shiny.

Question: How does *Fluoride Varnish* work?

Answer: Fluoride in varnish enters the tooth enamel and makes the tooth hard. It prevents new cavities and slows down or stops decay from getting worse. If tooth decay is just starting, it repairs the tooth.

Question: Do I need to do anything special after my child has *Fluoride Varnish*?

Answer: Your child does not have to wait to eat and drink. Food should be soft and not crunchy or hot for the rest of day. Do not brush or floss the teeth until the next morning.

Question: Is *Fluoride Varnish* safe?

Answer: Fluoride varnish is safe. It is used on babies from the time they have their first tooth. Because the varnish is painted onto teeth and only a very small amount is used, almost no fluoride is swallowed.

Question: How often should my child get *Fluoride Varnish*?

Answer: Fluoride varnish can be applied 4 times a year or every 3 months. Studies show that children who get fluoride varnish every 3 months have fewer cavities than those who get it less often or not at all.

Question: What about children with prescription fluoride, vitamins or formula with fluoride or fluoride in drinking water? Should they get *Fluoride Varnish*?

Answer: Some children get more cavities than others. Talk to your doctor or dentist on what is best for your child. Even if your child gets fluoride from other sources, your doctor or dentist may still feel it best for your child to have fluoride varnish.

Question: Why is my doctor using *Fluoride Varnish*?

Answer: Very young children usually do not see a dentist unless there is a problem. Yet they will see a doctor 11 times for check-ups and shots by the time they are three. Dental health is an important part of the total health of your child. Because your doctor cares about your child's health, looking at the teeth and applying fluoride varnish is another way to keep your child healthy.

Question: When is *Fluoride Varnish* not used?

Answer: Fluoride varnish is not used if there are noticeable sores in the mouth or on the gums. It is also not used if there is an allergy to one of the ingredients in the varnish or to pine nuts. If you have any questions, talk to your doctor or dentist.

