



Baby Teeth • Keep Them Beautiful

Fluoride Varnish Project

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ABOUT THE FLUORIDE VARNISH TREATMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General Questions:

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 as young as 12-18 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 a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities and helps to stop cavities that have already started by making tooth enamel harder.

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. To date, there has been no evidence of negative reactions to the varnish. However, it is not recommended for those with colophony allergies. Your child may have a colophony allergy if he/she reacts to skin creams, soaps or beauty products.

How is it put on the teeth?

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

Does the application take a long time?

Depending on the number of teeth, the application of fluoride varnish can take from a few seconds to a few minutes.

When can my child eat and drink after the fluoride varnish application?

Drinking or rinsing with water and eating soft foods will not affect the fluoride varnish, but it is preferable that your child does not eat or drink anything for at least 30 minutes after treatment. However, children should avoid crunchy and chewy foods, such as raw carrots and apples, and chewing gum for the remainder of the day that the varnish was applied as these types of food tend to rub off the fluoride varnish.

When can I brush my child's teeth?

Do not brush or floss your child's teeth for 24 hours following the varnish application (after 24 hours continue to brush your child's teeth at least twice a day with a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste). The varnish may appear as a yellowish film on the teeth and gums. However, this will gradually wear off as the teeth are brushed. If your child complains of sore gums as a result of the varnish, simply wipe the gums with a clean, wet washcloth.

How will the teeth look after the application?

Your child's teeth will be yellow after the fluoride varnish is painted on, but the yellow color will come off when you brush your child's teeth the day after the application. It is also common for the varnish to appear milky white immediately following the application; this too will completely disappear within a few hours.

How often should this application be done?

The fluoride coating will work best if it is painted on the teeth 2-4 times a year.

Specific Questions:**Does the varnish work if teeth are getting soft?**

Yes! If early stage dental decay is occurring (soft spots on the front of an infant's front teeth), fluoride varnish can help harden the tooth surface and prevent further decay.

Is there any risk from swallowing the varnish?

The varnish is very safe as even if the 4-drop application were to be swallowed by an infant, it would only be equivalent to a child's fluoride supplement tablet. As with a tube of toothpaste or fluoride gel in the dental office, the tube of fluoride varnish is kept out of the reach of children/infants.

Why is fluoride varnish fine for my child, but fluoride toothpastes are not recommended for children under 3 years of age?

Fluoride varnish is applied topically, up to 4 times a year to the tooth surface and the excess is wiped off. With toothpaste (which is not recommended for children under 3), young children tend to swallow more than they spit out and depending on how much they brush (1-4 times a day), this is a lot of swallowed fluoride that works systemically on tooth development and there is the risk that children will ingest levels of fluoride that exceed recommended limits.

We will be pleased to answer any further questions you may have about the study at any time. Please call _____ at _____ or the principal investigator, Dr. Herenia P. Lawrence, at (416) 979-4908, extension 4492.