

Fluoride Varnish



Helping Baby Smiles Stay Strong

Fluoride varnish is an easy way to protect against cavities (also known as caries or tooth decay). Cavities that are not treated can cause pain and infections for your child. It may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. You can help prevent cavities by bringing your child to the dentist for fluoride varnish. Make sure your child brushes their teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste to help lower the risk of cavities. For children less than 2 years old, talk with your Primary Care Provider* (PCP) or dentist about using fluoride toothpaste.

**Your Primary Care Provider is the doctor, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner that is in charge of your health care.*



What Is Fluoride Varnish?



- A protective coating that is painted on teeth by dentist to prevent tooth decay
- Safe, quick, and doesn't hurt
- Can be given by dentist as soon as the first tooth comes. Talk with your PCP or dentist about fluoride varnish when your child's first tooth shows.
- Helps even if you are getting fluoride drops, tablets, rinses, toothpaste, or drinking water with fluoride
- Can be given at Child Health and Disability Prevention visits and other medical or dental visits
- Works best when given by your PCP or dentist 2 or more times per year
- May coat teeth with a slight yellow color for a short time. Brushing the next morning will return teeth to their normal color.



Parent or Caregiver Checklist After Varnish

- ☐ It's ok to drink water after 30 minutes. Water needs to be room temperature (not hot or cold).
- ☐ After 4–6 hours you may give your child soft foods, cold or warm foods (not hot), or liquids.
- ☐ Wait to brush and floss teeth at the start of the next day or at least after 4–6 hours. Ask your PCP or dentist for details.
- ☐ Remember that any yellow coating will go away after a few days.
- ☐ Remind your child to spit when rinsing if they know how to spit.



Remember

- Baby teeth are important!
- Ask your PCP about getting fluoride varnish for your child.
- Find a “dental home” for regular visits to the dentist.
- Make your child’s first dental visit by age 1.
- Brush your baby’s teeth each morning and night with a small dab of fluoride toothpaste.
- If your child is less than 6 years old, watch them brush. Make sure they use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Have them spit it out rather than swallow.
- Avoid sugary snacks, drinks, and juices. Try tap water that has fluoride instead!
- Don’t put your child to sleep with a bottle.
- Don’t let your child sip juice, soda, or milk for a long time in a car seat, stroller, or baby playpen.
- Cavities can be prevented!



For more info on children’s oral health, please visit [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) or the [California Department of Public Health](https://www.sfdph.org).

Sources:



Children’s Oral Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
[cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



“Fluoride Varnish Helping Smiles Stay Strong”
San Francisco Department of Public Health
[sfdph.org](https://www.sfdph.org)

For more information call Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** or visit [sfdph.org/health-ed](https://www.sfdph.org/health-ed)

24/7 Nurse Advice Line **1(877) 977-3397** | Talk to a doctor 24/7 [sfdph.org/teladoc](https://www.sfdph.org/teladoc)