



The Tooth Fairy Times



Public Health Information from The Dental Health Program | Division of Maternal and Child Health | Prince George's County Health Department

Protect Babies' and Children's Teeth With Fluoride Varnish

About Fluoride Varnish

Fluoride varnish is fluoride (a safe chemical) that a dentist paints onto the tooth surface. The fluoride varnish strengthens the tooth's surface enamel. The fluoride can prevent new tooth decay (also known as cavities or caries) from forming, and slow down or stop existing tooth decay from getting worse.



Why Babies and Children Should Get Fluoride Varnish

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease found in children. Teeth that do not have fluoride varnish are at higher risk for tooth decay. Tooth decay in babies and children can result in:

- pain and infections
- problems eating and sleeping
- poor general health
- problems speaking, learning, and playing

Fluoride varnish allows for a higher concentration of fluoride to contact the tooth enamel surface, for a longer period of time, than fluoride found in water and toothpaste. The American Dental Association (ADA) has determined that fluoride varnish is effective in preventing tooth decay in children.

Safety of Fluoride Varnish

Fluoride varnish has already been Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for use in cavity liners and as a tooth desensitizer. Fluoride varnish only contains a very small amount of fluoride.

A dentist can quickly and easily paint the fluoride varnish onto your child's teeth using a small brush. The fluoride varnish is painless and does not taste bad.

The fluoride varnish may appear white or yellow on the child's teeth. This is completely normal and the color will disappear after brushing.

When A Child Should Get Fluoride Varnish

Children should begin getting fluoride varnish applications when their first teeth appear, which can be anywhere from 6 months of age and up. Fluoride varnish works best if it is painted onto the teeth 2 to 4 times a year.

After A Child Receives A Fluoride Varnish Treatment

Children can eat and drink right after the fluoride varnish treatment. However they should **avoid hot, hard or sticky foods for the remainder of the day.** Instead give children soft foods to eat.

Wait until the next morning to brush your child's teeth. This allows the fluoride varnish time to settle onto the child's teeth.



Important Tooth Decay Prevention Tips for Babies and Children

- After feeding, wipe the baby's gums, even before a baby's teeth appear.
- **DO NOT** put a baby to bed with a bottle. If the baby wants to go to sleep with a bottle, make sure that the bottle only contains water.
- Make sure children's teeth are brushed twice a day, for at least 2 minutes with fluoride-containing toothpaste.
- Take the baby to see the dentist before his or her first birthday.
- Be sure that your children see the dentist regularly (at least 2 times a year).
- Give children health snacks to eat, for example, fruits and vegetables. Avoid too much soda, sweets, and junk food.

To learn more about fluoride varnish, talk to your dental or medical provider. For more information about general oral health for children, go to Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/topics/child.htm>