

Fluoride Varnish

Application Protocol



Introduction

Fluoride varnish is a thin coating of resin that is applied to the tooth surface to protect it from decay. According to the FDA, fluoride varnish falls under the category of “drugs and devices” that presents minimal risk and is subject to the lowest level of regulation.

Purpose

The purpose of applying fluoride varnish is to retard, arrest, and reverse the process of cavity formation.

Indications

Infants and children with a moderate or high risk of developing cavities. A child is considered at risk if he/she:

- Has had cavities in the past or has white spot lesions and stained fissures
- Continues to use the bottle past 1 year of age or sleeps with a bottle containing liquids other than water
- Engages in prolonged or ad lib use throughout the day of a bottle or sippy cup containing liquids other than water
- Breast or bottle feeds on demand at night
- Has a developmental disability
- Chronically uses high sugar oral medications
- Has family members with a history of caries

Contraindications

Children with a low risk of cavity formation who consume optimally fluoridated water or children who receive routine fluoride treatments through a dental office.

Application Procedure

Pre-application instructions:

- Advise the parent that you will be applying varnish to the child’s teeth and that it can be brushed off the following day.

You will need to have:

- Disposable gloves
- Gauze sponges (2 x 2)
- Fluoride varnish
- Small disposable fluoride applicator
- Paper towels or disposable bids to place under the child’s head (optional)





Position the child:

- For an infant:
 - Place the child on the parent's lap with the child's head on the parent's knees and the child's legs around the parent's waist. Position yourself knee-to-knee with the parent and treat the child from behind the head.
 - Or, place the infant on an exam table and work from behind the head.
 - Or, as you gain experience, do whatever works for you.
- For a young child:
 - Place the child in a prone or sitting position and work from above the head as with an infant. Or, adapt a method that works best for you.

The application:

- Using gentle finger pressure, open the child's mouth.
- Remove excess saliva with a gauze sponge.
- Use your fingers and sponges to isolate the dry teeth and keep them dry. You will usually be able to isolate a quadrant of teeth at a time, but may have to work with fewer teeth in some children. Infants are easiest because they have only anterior teeth.
- **Apply** a thin layer of the varnish to **all surfaces of the teeth**. Avoid applying varnish on large open cavities where there may be pulp involvement.
- Once the varnish is applied, you need not worry about moisture (saliva) contamination. The varnish sets quickly.

Post-application instructions:

Tell the family that the child should:

- Eat a soft, non-abrasive diet for the rest of the day.
- Not brush or floss until the next morning

Remember:

- Even though the child may fuss, the varnish application is not unpleasant or painful.
- The varnish application should be repeated at **three-month intervals for high-risk children and at six-month intervals for children who are not at high risk.**

