# Fluoride Varnish

**Helps strengthen teeth and can prevent tooth decay in children**

 Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## What is fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on the teeth. Fluoride strengthens the teeth and prevents tooth decay.

## Why is fluoride varnish recommended for children?

Fluoride varnish helps prevent or stop tooth decay. Tooth decay can cause pain and infection. Children with tooth decay may have problems eating, speaking, playing, and learning.

## Is fluoride varnish safe?

Fluoride varnish is safe and recommended. Fluoride varnish can be applied beginning with babies first teeth.

## How is fluoride varnish applied to the teeth?

A dental or medical provider paints the fluoride varnish on teeth with a brush.

## How often should fluoride varnish be applied?

Have your dental or medical provider apply fluoride varnish at least twice a year but sometimes more frequent applications are needed.

## Care following a fluoride varnish application:

Parents and caregivers should not give hot, hard, or sticky foods for at least an hour.

## Parents and caregivers can help prevent tooth decay in children. Here is how:

- Wipe your baby's gums with a clean, damp cloth after feeding, even before their teeth appear.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle. If you must, make sure it is only filled with water.
- Brush your child's teeth twice a day for two minutes with toothpaste that has fluoride.
- Take your child to the dentist by their first birthday.
- Visit the dentist regularly with your child.
- Give your child healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid sharing toothbrushes, eating utensils, or cups with your child.
- Give your child tap water if it has fluoride in it.

**For more information on oral health, visit:**
**health.maryland.gov/phpa/ oralhealth/pages/fluoride.aspx**