



- Apply to children at-risk of tooth decay, beginning with the first tooth.
- Apply 2-4 times/year for maximum benefit. Many providers apply varnish on the same schedule as childhood immunizations.

Supplies needed:

- Cotton gauze (2x2)
- Fluoride varnish and applicator
- Latex/vinyl gloves

Step 1: Position the child—knee-to-knee

- For an infant or toddler, place the child on the parent's lap with the head on their knees and the legs around the waist. Position yourself knee-to-knee with the parent and treat the child from above the head.
- Or, place the young child on an exam table and work from above the head.



Step 2: Apply the fluoride varnish

- Open the child's mouth.
- Dry the teeth with gauze.
- Apply a thin layer of the fluoride varnish to all surfaces of the teeth.
- Once it is applied, the fluoride varnish sets quickly with contact of the saliva.
- Repeat the fluoride varnish application every 3 – 6 months as necessary.



Step 3: Follow-up info for parent

- Teeth may be yellow from the varnish.
- Child should eat a soft, non-abrasive diet for the rest of the day.
- Do not brush or floss until the next morning.
- Give the parent the information sheet "Fluoride Varnish."





3 SIMPLE STEPS

Step 1: Oral health screening and risk assessment (birth – 3 years)

RISK ASSESSMENT

- Key factors that determine risk:
 - Are there decay or white spot lesions visible?
 - Has child ever had any cavities or fillings?
 - Has mother (or primary caregiver) or siblings had cavities or fillings in the past year?
 - Is there visible plaque?

SCREENING

- Position the child
 - Infant: knee-to-knee position
 - Older child: position the child on an exam table and work from above the head
- Lift the lip and look in the mouth for:
 - Visible plaque
 - Early signs of decay (white spot or line lesions along the gum line)
 - Brown spots on teeth
 - Signs of moderate to severe dental decay where portions of the teeth are decayed
 - Signs of a dental abscess
- Determine if child is at risk and would benefit from fluoride varnish application
- Refer child to dentist, as necessary



Step 2: Application of fluoride varnish

APPLY THE VARNISH

- Dry teeth with gauze (if possible)
- Apply fluoride varnish to all surfaces of the teeth
- Once applied, the varnish sets quickly

INSTRUCT THE PARENT AND GIVE AFTER-CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Eat a soft, non-abrasive diet for the rest of the day
- Do not brush or floss until the next morning
- The teeth may be yellow and not shiny until the next day



Step 3: Deliver anticipatory guidance to family

“LIFT THE LIP” TRAINING

- Show how to examine the child using the lap position. Recommend doing this monthly.

ENCOURAGE FAMILIES TO:

- Begin cleaning and brushing teeth every day, as soon as the first tooth appears.
- Choose healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables and cheese; limit sugary, starchy or sticky snacks.
- Avoid “grazing” – snacking or sipping sweet liquids throughout the day.