

## Why is it important to take care of baby teeth?

Baby teeth:

- Help your child chew food.
- Help your child speak clearly.
- Guide the permanent teeth into place.
- Help with jaw and face formation.
- Add to your child's good health.
- Make a pretty smile.

Children do not lose all their baby teeth until they are about 11 or 12 years old; therefore, it is important to protect their teeth from cavities.



To learn more about fluoride varnish, talk to your dentist, or contact:

**Oral Health Program**  
**Division of Family Health**  
**North Dakota Department of Health**  
**600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301**  
**Bismarck, ND 58505-0200**  
**800.472.2286 (toll-free)**  
**[www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth)**



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

# Fluoride Varnish



## Protect Your Child's Smile

Adapted from the Oral Health Program,  
Michigan Department of Health

November 2007

## What is fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities and to help stop cavities that have already started.

The paint-on fluoride varnish is sticky, so it attaches to the teeth easily and makes the outer layer (enamel) of the teeth harder, helping to prevent cavities.

## Why is fluoride varnish recommended for children's teeth?

Tooth decay is one of the most common preventable diseases seen in children. Children as young as 12 to 18 months can get cavities. Cavities in children's teeth can cause pain and prevent children from eating, speaking, sleeping and learning.

## Does my child need fluoride varnish?

Children who are at risk for dental decay or who do not live in communities with fluoridated water benefit from the application of fluoride varnish to their teeth to help stop or prevent decay.

## At what age should fluoride varnish be applied?

Fluoride varnish is recommended for children of all ages, including infants.

## How is fluoride varnish applied to the teeth?

The fluoride varnish is easily painted on the teeth with a small disposable brush. It is quick, painless and does not have a bad taste.



## How long does fluoride varnish last?

The fluoride varnish sticks to the teeth until it is brushed away the next day; however, the benefits of the fluoride will last for several months. Fluoride varnish needs to be reapplied every three to four months for best results.

## Is fluoride varnish safe?

Yes, fluoride varnish can be used on babies from the time they have their first teeth. Only a very small amount of fluoride varnish is used.

## Who will provide this service?

A trained health professional will apply the fluoride varnish to your child's teeth.

## What should parents do after fluoride varnish is applied to a child's teeth?

- **Do not brush or floss** your child's teeth until the next day.
- Don't allow your child to eat hard or chewy foods or chew gum on the treatment day. This might chip off the varnish.
- Do not give your child a fluoride supplement on the treatment day.
- The fluoride varnish can be yellow or clear. If the teeth appear yellow for 24 hours, this is normal. This yellow color will disappear when the teeth are brushed the next day.

