fluoride varnish

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

A guide for conducting an oral assessment and applying fluoride varnish

1. YOU WILL NEED

- Gloves
- Gauze to remove excess saliva and plaque
- Fluoride Varnish
- Disposable applicator brush
- Optional mouth mirror, tongue blade and flashlight

2. POSITION THE CHILD

- Knee-to-knee with the caregiver or put the child on the examining table
- Adapt a method that works for you

3. DO THE ORAL ASSESSMENT

- Using gentle finger pressure, open the child's mouth and lift the lip.
- Look at the tongue, teeth, gums, inside of the cheeks and roof of the mouth to identify oral disease or abnormalities—such as cysts, tooth decay, delayed tooth eruption, premature tooth loss, abscesses or trauma.
- Assessments or screenings are not examinations and do not involve making a diagnosis.
- Patients should be referred if you detect anything that is not normal, even if you are unsure.

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4. APPLY FLUORIDE VARNISH

- Remove excess saliva and plaque from the teeth with a gauze sponge. Teeth should be as dry as possible.
- Use your fingers and gauze to isolate the dry teeth as you work on several teeth at a time. With younger children you will have fewer teeth to work with.
- Apply a thin layer of varnish to all surfaces of the teeth. The varnish will harden immediately once it comes in contact with the saliva.
- Repeat the varnish application every six months.

5. INSTRUCT THE PARENT/CAREGIVER

- Eat a soft, non-abrasive diet for the rest of the day.
- Do not brush or floss until the next morning.
- Tell the parent or caregiver that the teeth may not be white and shiny until the next day.
- Provide the parent with the age-appropriate information on oral health.

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how to do an oral assessment →