

# Oral Health *Facts*

## Fluoride Varnish



### What is fluoride varnish?

- Fluoride varnish is a fluoride treatment that is painted on teeth to help prevent cavities and to help stop small cavities that have already started. It is the only type of fluoride treatment the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends for children under 6 years.

### Why do we recommend putting fluoride varnish on children's teeth?

- Tooth decay is one of the most common preventable diseases of childhood. Children as young as 12 to 18 months can get cavities. Cavities in baby teeth can cause pain and even prevent children from being able to eat, speak, sleep and learn properly.

### Is fluoride varnish safe?

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

### How is it put on the teeth?

- The varnish is painted on the teeth and it sets fast when saliva touches it. It is quick and easy to apply and does not have a bad taste. There is no pain, but your child may cry because babies and children don't like having things put in their mouths, especially by people they don't know.

### How often should your child get fluoride varnish painted on his teeth?

- The ADA recommends that fluoride varnish be applied every 3–6 months. In Ohio, children covered by Medicaid can have fluoride varnish applied every 180 days. Your child may be able to get fluoride varnish during a well-child visit at the doctor's office.

### What do you do after a fluoride varnish treatment?

- Your child should eat a soft diet for the rest of the day. Avoid hard foods including pretzels, apples, celery or carrots.
- Do not brush or floss until the next morning. By leaving the varnish on the teeth overnight, the fluoride is slowly absorbed into the tooth surface.
- Your child's teeth may not be white and shiny until the next day when the teeth are brushed.

### Baby Teeth are Important! They:

- Let your child chew food.
- Help with jaw and facial formation.
- Help in speech development.
- Add to your child's good health.
- Guide the permanent (adult) teeth into place.
- Make a pretty smile!