# Fluoride Varnish

Topical fluoride application on a child's teeth is proven to be one of the most effective ways to retard, arrest, and even reverse early cavities. It is also highly effective in preventing initial decay. Once applied, it helps the tooth "remineralize" or restore surface enamel. Fluoride varnishes are applied directly to the tooth surface, providing for both immediate "remineralization" as well as on-going "time-release" fluoride protection.

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Southeastern District Health Department
*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

For more information contact:
Sally Kane, BS, RDH

**Southwest District Health**
920 Main Street
Caldwell, ID 83605
(208) 455-5391
skane@phd3.state.id.us

# Fluoride Varnish

An Alternative to Traditional Topical Fluoride Therapy

# Facts on Early Childhood Caries (ECC)

- Dental caries is an infectious disease passed on by a mother's cavity-causing bacteria.
- ECC is caused by frequent & prolonged exposure to sugar & bacteria.
- Five to 10 percent of young children have ECC.
- The cost to treat ECC is $1,000-$6,000 per child.
- ECC may cause trouble concentrating, difficulty learning, & absences from school.
- Children may also develop poor eating habits, speech problems, & socialization problems related to low self esteem.

# To reduce the risk of ECC, parents & caregivers should:

- Never put a child to bed with a bottle.
- Introduce a cup by 6 months of age.
- Schedule the 1st dental visit by 12 months of age.
- Reduce frequent sugar consumption.
- For children under age 2, clean teeth daily with a small toothbrush or a moist cloth– For children age 2-6, clean teeth daily with a toothbrush & a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Remember, most young children need adult assistance with tooth brushing everyday.
- Give fluoride supplements at 6 months as recommended by your dental or medical provider.

# Answers to commonly asked questions about fluoride varnish:

**Is this a new method?**

No. Fluoride varnish was developed in the early 60's in Europe.

Parents should examine their children's teeth on a regular basis.

**Is it effective in reducing decay?**

Yes. Fluoride varnish has been found to reduce decay on tooth surfaces between 50 and 70%.

**Is it more costly than conventional topical fluoride?**

No. Fluoride varnish applications cost the same conventional topical fluoride.

**Why would you use fluoride varnish instead of traditional fluoride?**

Varnishes provide a more efficient way for the tooth to absorb fluoride: its slow release time further enhances its effectiveness.

Since the varnish is applied directly to the tooth—the chance for swallowing the fluoride is minimal. Which makes it acceptable for use in very young children.

**How is the varnish applied?**

Application is quick and easy: small droplets of varnish are applied directly to the tooth surface.

**What about application precautions?**

After application, the teeth will have a "yellow film" which is the fluoride varnish. It is alright for your child to drink or eat after the application of fluoride varnish. The child should not brush the evening following the application, but should resume normal hygiene practices the following morning.

**Is it safe?**

Yes. Fluoride varnishes are very safe. They have been used in Scandinavia and Canada for a long time. A toxic dose of fluoride is not reached until ten times the normal dose.

## With the stroke of a brush coated with fluoride varnish, dentists and doctors can paint a lasting smile in an easy, safe, and cost-effective way!

## Prevention is the key!

Have the fluoride varnish applied to your child's teeth by your family dentist or physician. This is the most effective way to reduce early childhood carries.