

# Michigan Department of Community Health

## Oral Health Program

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### Fluoride Varnish Fact Sheet

#### The Problem

Tooth decay in children is a widespread preventable disease. Children as young as 12-18 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.

The incidence of early childhood caries is much higher in certain high risk populations. A Head Start treatment program conducted by Mott Children's Health Center in Flint Michigan has consistently found that nearly 50% of these children have untreated decay. Implementing proven prevention strategies, such as fluoride varnish, in the first year of life has the potential to prevent a significant burden of disease.

#### 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 painted 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.
- Fluoride varnish is a topical fluoride treatment, which strengthens the teeth and reduces the prevalence of decay.

#### Is Fluoride Varnish Safe?

- Fluoride varnish is endorsed by the American Dental Association
- Fluoride varnish is approved by the FDA

#### What are the Benefits of Fluoride Varnish?

- Fluoride varnish releases fluoride over several months, which strengthens the teeth and helps to prevent decay. Fluoride varnish can prevent new decay by 60% and arrest decay that has already started.
- No instruments are put in the mouth.

- Fluoride varnish does not have a bad taste.
- Fluoride varnish dries quickly once it encounters saliva.
- Fluoride varnish is quick and easy to apply.
- The application of fluoride varnish is painless.

**How often should fluoride varnish be applied?**

- To maintain effectiveness, fluoride varnish should be applied every 3-4 months.

**After Application of Fluoride Varnish:**

- The child should avoid crunchy and sticky foods for the remainder of the day (eat soft foods).
- Do not brush teeth until the following day.
- It is normal for the teeth to feel sticky after application
- The fluoride varnish can be yellow, therefore, may appear yellow on the teeth. This yellow color will go away when the teeth are brushed the next day.

