

Fluoride Varnish Application: 7 Steps for Community Workers

1. Get Ready

Set out a paper towel with a child's toothbrush, gauze squares, fluoride varnish, and exam gloves.



2. Greet the Child and Interview the Parents

Ask the following questions:

- Have you started cleaning your child's teeth with a fluoride toothpaste?
- Have you taken your child to a dentist yet? When was the last visit?
- Have you or any of your other children had many cavities?
- Does your child take a bottle or sippy cup to bed at night or frequently walk around with a bottle or sippy cup throughout the day?
- How often does your child snack throughout the day? On what?

Note: As the family answers the questions, you can educate the family.

Note: If you are providing fluoride varnish in a daycare or school setting where the family is not present, you will omit this step.

3. Position the child

Babies: Assume the knee-to-knee position with the child sitting in the parent's or another person's lap and lowering the child's head onto your lap.

3 and older: The child can stand or sit in front of you.

4. Brush the Teeth and Provide an Oral Health Screening

Demonstrate how to brush a child's teeth, showing the caregiver how to do the same at home. This is a good time to remind the family about the importance of using fluoride toothpaste daily.

“Count” the child’s teeth aloud, using the toothbrush to keep the mouth propped open and to avoid getting bit. Assess the child’s oral condition, looking for chalky white spots, obvious tooth decay, or tooth defects.

5. Apply Fluoride Varnish

Provide fluoride varnish if the child is at high risk for tooth decay. Apply the varnish to all surfaces of all of the teeth.

6. Summarize and Follow-up

If the family is present, discuss your findings and recommendations for follow-up and home care.

Note: In a daycare or school setting, you will need a system for referring children who have dental caries to a dental health professional for treatment.