

## TIPS TO PREVENT TOOTH DECAY IN CHILDREN

- ◆ Wipe baby's gums with a wet cloth after feeding even before baby's teeth appear.
- ◆ Do not put baby to bed with a bottle. If you have to, make sure it is only filled with water.
- ◆ Brush twice a day for at least two minutes with toothpaste that has fluoride.
- ◆ Take children to the dentist by their first birthday.
- ◆ Visit the dentist regularly.
- ◆ Give children healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Avoid sharing toothbrushes, eating utensils or cups.
- ◆ Drink tap water if your community water system or private well has fluoride in it.

**TOOTH DECAY IS  
PREVENTABLE**

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease found in children.

**Good News!  
It is preventable!**

Taking care of children's teeth, including baby teeth, as soon as they first appear is key.



Office of  
Oral Health



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# Fluoride Varnish



**...because baby teeth  
are important!**

Some Tips for a Healthy  
Smile from your Maryland  
Department of Health and  
Mental Hygiene

# Fluoride Varnish Helps Prevent or Stop Tooth Decay

## Baby Teeth are Important!

### Q. What is fluoride varnish?

A. Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on the teeth. Over a period of time, the varnish releases fluoride which strengthens teeth and prevents tooth decay.

### Q. Why is fluoride varnish recommended for children's teeth?

A. Fluoride varnish helps prevent or stop tooth decay. If tooth decay remains untreated, it causes pain and infections that may lead to poor general health and problems with eating, speaking, playing and learning.



### Q. Is fluoride varnish safe?

A. Fluoride varnish is safe and can be used on babies from the time they have their first teeth. Only a very small amount of fluoride varnish is used.

### Q. How is fluoride varnish applied to the teeth?

A. The fluoride varnish is painted on the teeth with a brush. It is quick and easy to apply. Children's teeth may appear clear or yellow after the fluoride varnish application. This is normal and will disappear when the teeth are brushed the next day.



### Q. How often should fluoride varnish be applied?

A. The fluoride varnish will work best if it is painted on teeth two to four times a year.

### Q. Who can provide the fluoride varnish application?

A. A trained dental or medical provider.

### Baby Teeth:

Help children learn how to talk and be able to speak clearly;

Help make sure there is enough space in children's mouth for permanent teeth;

Are important for proper feeding and nutrition; and

Are important for overall good health.

Helpful tips for parents and caregivers after the fluoride varnish application.

- ◆ Wait until the next day to brush children's teeth.
- ◆ Give children soft foods and avoid hot, hard or sticky foods after the fluoride varnish application.