Fluoride Varnish

Preventing Tooth Decay

What is tooth decay and how can it be prevented?

Tooth decay is a preventable chronic disease that affects people across all age groups, especially impacting children and seniors. In fact, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood. Untreated tooth decay can cause pain and tooth loss, which can have negative effects on self-esteem. Tooth decay can also affect eating, sleeping, learning, and proper nutrition, even the ability to gain or keep a job. Community water fluoridation as well as access to prevention and treatment dental services decreases the risk for developing tooth decay; however, many Nevadans lack access to regular dental care. One way to deliver preventive oral health services is to apply fluoride varnish on teeth in the dental and medical setting.

How does fluoride varnish work?

Fluoride has been shown to be **safe**, inexpensive and extremely effective in preventing tooth decay. When acid from plaque bacteria begin taking minerals out of the tooth enamel, fluoride can put minerals back in, and therefore prevent tooth decay! Fluoride varnish provides **topical** fluoride, and it is not swallowed. This type of topical fluoride can prevent tooth decay by 20-40%. Other important sources of fluoride include toothpaste, fluoridated community drinking water, and drinks/food prepared with fluoridated water.

Is fluoride varnish safe?

Yes. Fluoride varnish is a topical fluoride treatment, and it is safe even for residents of Nevada that have the benefit of drinking fluoridated water and/or children who may take daily fluoride supplements. However, in rare cases, some individuals with colophonium and pine nut allergies have experienced adverse reactions to fluoride varnish.

What is Nevada doing to prevent tooth decay using fluoride varnish?

Oral health is an important part of overall health. Your child's doctor is concerned with oral health too. Since many children do not get to the dentist when they are very young, the doctor plays an important role in giving your child fluoride treatments to prevent cavities.

In Nevada, the application of fluoride varnish by doctors and other qualified licensed health professionals is a covered service by Medicaid and Nevada Check Up for anyone under the age of 20.

As a parent, what should I do?

- Request fluoride varnish be applied to your child's teeth when they are at the physician or dentist's office; and REMEMBER…
- Most children do not find fluoride varnish unpleasant, although they may fuss during the application;
- There may be temporary discoloration of teeth, but the discoloration will go away once the varnish is brushed off the next day; and
- Children should not brush or floss until the next morning.

Oral Health Nevada