



Addressing oral health in early childhood

Keeping baby teeth healthy

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in childhood, yet it's completely preventable. Poor oral health can inhibit a child's ability to eat nutritious foods, socialize and learn in school. Virginia Health Catalyst helps Anthem HealthKeepers Plus medical providers include oral health services, education and referrals in their practices to ensure all children receive comprehensive primary care.

Fluoride varnish — an effective, quick, low-cost intervention

Fluoride varnish benefits teeth by making tooth enamel harder and stronger and rebuilding weakened tooth enamel to prevent further decay. Fluoride varnish is a concentrated dose of fluoride applied to the tooth with a small brush. Research shows that four or more applications of varnish in early childhood can lower rates of tooth decay. It's safe and painless, and the application takes less than a minute.

Integrating fluoride varnish in a pediatric practice

Many members of the pediatric team can apply fluoride varnish during well-child visits, including physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and nurses (RN and LPN). Medicaid will reimburse fluoride varnish application up to six times starting at 6 months of age through the child's third birthday. Providers typically apply fluoride varnish every six months along with age-appropriate preventive services.

Getting started in your practice

Start by educating your staff on the benefits of fluoride varnish using the Smiles for Life training module. Virginia Health Catalyst can provide additional training and resources as well. Next, order fluoride varnish supplies and decide which team members will apply the varnish. Fluoride varnish is ideal for children ages 0 to 3 who do not have a dental home, so be sure to ask families if they already take their infants and toddlers to the dentist before applying varnish at a pediatric well visit.

For education and billing resources, visit the Virginia Health Catalyst website at <https://vahealthcatalyst.org/provider-resources/fluoride-varnish>.

If you would like to request a fluoride varnish training or more resources for your staff, reach out to Virginia Health Catalyst at **1-804-269-8722**.

Additional resources:

- [Bright Futures, American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Oral Health Integration Toolkit](#)
- [Fluoride Varnish Suppliers, American Dental Association](#)

<https://mediproviders.anthem.com/va>