



What are School Fluoride Varnish Delivery Programs?

School fluoride varnish delivery programs apply fluoride varnish to the teeth of children (preschool through high school) either at school or at offsite locations. Programs may provide one or more of the following additional services:

- Risk assessment for tooth decay
- Oral hygiene instruction and supplies
- Oral health education
- Dental sealants
- Referrals to dental care

Depending on state regulations, fluoride varnish applications may be administered by:

- Dental professionals
- Trained non-dental health professionals
- Trained lay workers

Why is This Important?

- Untreated tooth decay, one of the most prevalent diseases among children, reduces a child's ability to eat, speak, learn, and play.
- Tooth decay is significantly higher among children from families with lower incomes as well as historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic populations.
- While topical fluoride treatment prevents tooth decay, fewer than 18% of children from families with lower incomes received a topical fluoride treatment during an annual dental visit in 2013-2014.

Major Findings

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends school fluoride varnish delivery programs to prevent cavities among school-aged children (preschool through high school). Across the studies reviewed, the school fluoride varnish delivery programs:

- Achieved meaningful rates of student participation of 68%.
- Reduced onset (prevented) of dental cavities by 32% in permanent teeth and 25% in primary teeth.
- Reduced the progression of cavities to advanced stages by 10%.

Evidence indicates that school fluoride varnish programs can reduce disparities in onset of tooth decay by income and other social determinants of health when they are implemented in communities with lower incomes and high rates of tooth decay among children.

Learn More

Read the [complete summary of the systematic review](#), access implementation resources, and find out more about oral health.

Established in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) is an independent, nonfederal panel of public health and prevention experts whose members are appointed by the director of CDC. CPSTF provides information for a wide range of decision makers on programs, services, and other interventions aimed at improving population health. Although CDC provides administrative, scientific, and technical support for CPSTF, the recommendations developed are those of CPSTF and do not undergo review or approval by CDC. Find more information at www.thecommunityguide.org.