

# Oral Health and Fluoride Varnish

## CHILD AND TEEN CHECKUPS (C&TC) FACT SHEET FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

As part of the physical exam, lift the lips and inspect the teeth and soft tissues of the mouth. Fluoride varnish application (FVA) is required at the ages indicated on the C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards. Refer to a dental home at each visit.

### C&TC standards

#### General

Provide the following required components:

- A thorough assessment of the teeth and oral soft tissues as part of the physical examination.
- Anticipatory guidance on caries prevention and regular preventive dental care.
- FVA as indicated on the [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](#).
- FVA for older children based on risk factors. Refer to the [American Academy of Pediatrics Oral Health Risk Assessment Tool](#).
- Verbal referral to a dental home at every C&TC visit from the eruption of the first tooth or no later than 12 months of age.

#### Personnel

Physical exam components, anticipatory guidance, FVA, and verbal referral to a dentist must be provided by a licensed health care provider: physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or by a registered or public health nurse (RN, PHN) who has completed the C&TC

Comprehensive Screening training through the Minnesota Department of Health.

FVA may also be applied by trained clinic staff under supervision of the licensed health care provider.

#### Documentation

Document required components, including verbal or written consent for FVA or the reason it was not applied. Refer to the screening exceptions section of the [Minnesota Health Care Providers Manual](#).

Refer to the documentation forms on the [C&TC Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment resources](#) webpage for documentation examples or to use as a template with your electronic medical record.

#### Procedure

Lift the lips and include a thorough inspection of the teeth and soft tissues of the mouth as part of the routine physical exam.

Provide targeted anticipatory guidance on decreasing caries risk with counseling focused on diet and oral hygiene (Krol et al., 2023).

For information and training on FVA, refer to [Fluoride Varnish in the C&TC Setting](#).

## Additional recommendations

### Dental sealants

Refer children to a dentist when permanent molars erupt (Griffin et al., 2014).

### Water testing for fluoride

Minnesota children who drink primarily well or other non-public water system water may not be ingesting adequate fluoride. In such a case, the physician will recommend water testing ([Fluoride](#)) to determine the concentration of fluoride in a child's primary drinking water. If levels of fluoride are not adequate, systemic fluoride supplements can be prescribed (Clark et al., 2020).

### Importance of preventive oral health care

Dental caries affect over 40% of children aged 2 to 19, many of whom struggle to access dental care (Krol et al., 2023). Primary care providers can make a difference by educating families about caries' cause and risk factors and offering guidance on nutrition and oral hygiene.

### Professional recommendations

#### American Academy of Pediatrics

Fluoride varnish should be applied between the ages of 6 months and 5 years. Once teeth are present, apply fluoride varnish to all children every 3 to 6 months in the primary care or dental office based on caries risk (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2025).

#### United States Preventive Services Task Force

Primary care clinics should provide FVA to the primary teeth of all children, beginning when their first tooth erupts through age 5 years (US Preventive Services Task Force, 2021).

#### American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Children should visit the dentist every six months beginning at the eruption of the first tooth (Griffin et al., 2014).

## Resources

#### Minnesota Department of Human Services

- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](#)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section](#)

#### Minnesota Department of Health

- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\)](#)
- [Healthy Teeth. Healthy Baby.](#)

#### Other resources

- [Oral Health](#)
- [Oral Health Tips for Children](#)

## For more information

The Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program is administered through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Health.

For questions about this fact sheet or to obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650 or email [health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us](mailto:health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us).

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## Resource links

- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG)  
(<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG>)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Oral Health Risk Assessment Tool](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/oralhealth_RiskAssessmentTool.pdf)  
([https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/oralhealth\\_RiskAssessmentTool.pdf](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/oralhealth_RiskAssessmentTool.pdf))
- [Minnesota Health Care Providers Manual Screening Exceptions](https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16_150092#exceptions)  
([https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_DYNAMIC\\_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16\\_150092#exceptions](https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16_150092#exceptions))
- [C&TC Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment resources](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources)  
(<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources>)
- [Fluoride Varnish in the C&TC Setting](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childrenyouth/ctc/fluoridevarnish.html)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/people/childrenyouth/ctc/fluoridevarnish.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childrenyouth/ctc/fluoridevarnish.html))
- [Fluoride](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampproc/fluoridescp.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampproc/fluoridescp.pdf>)
- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG)  
(<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG>)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService)  
([www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService)

[e=GET\\_DYNAMIC\\_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs16\\_150092](https://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm))

- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm))
- [Healthy Teeth. Healthy Baby.](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/oralhealth/programs/healthybaby.html)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/people/oralhealth/programs/healthybaby.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/oralhealth/programs/healthybaby.html))
- [Oral Health](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/oral-health/) (<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/oral-health/>)
- [Oral Health Tips for Children](https://www.cdc.gov/oral-health/prevention/oral-health-tips-for-children.html)  
(<https://www.cdc.gov/oral-health/prevention/oral-health-tips-for-children.html>)

## References

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- Clark, M. B., Keels, M. A., Slayton, R. L., Section on Oral Health, Braun, P. A., Fischer-Owens, S. A., Ali Huff, Q., Karp, J. M., Rao Tate, A., Unkel, J. H., & Krol, D. (2020). Fluoride use in caries prevention in the primary care setting. *Pediatrics*, 146(6). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-034637>
- Griffin, S. O., Barker, L. K., Wei, L., Li, C.-H., Albuquerque, M. S., & Gooch, B. F. (2014, September). Use of dental care and effective preventive services in preventing tooth decay among U.S. children and adolescents – Medical expenditure panel survey, United States, 2003-2009 and national health and nutrition examination survey, United States, 2005-2010. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, 63(2), 54-60.
- Krol, D., Whelen, K., & The Section on Oral Health (2023). Maintaining and improving the oral health of young children. *Pediatrics*, 151(1). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-060417>
- US Preventive Services Task Force (2021). Screening and interventions to prevent dental caries in children younger than 5 years: US Preventive Services Task Force recommendation statement. *JAMA*, 326(21), 2172-2178. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.20007>