

Monday, February 26, 2024

Dear Partners,

Nova Scotia Health, Public Health, works collaboratively with partners across school, community, government, and health to improve oral health outcomes for children. As a component of this work, Public Health is pleased to announce that our school-based topical fluoride delivery program has resumed in the 2023-24 school year, having been paused for three years due to COVID-19.

A school-based fluoride delivery program has been part of Public Health's work in Nova Scotia since 1998. School-based fluoride programs are effective in reducing the occurrence of cavities in both primary and permanent teeth across the population and have been shown to reduce socio-economic differences in the distribution of childhood cavities. The benefits of school-based programs are greatest for children that face multiple risk conditions for dental decay and poor oral health outcomes. You may remember that our fluoride mouthrinse program was offered in certain elementary schools and involved a weekly mouthrinse that was provided by volunteers. Based on an extensive program review, we are modernizing our approach and have switched to a fluoride varnish program delivered by Public Health Dental Hygienists.

Public Health's Fluoride Varnish Program is a targeted program, focused on schools in communities who will benefit most from additional opportunities to receive fluoride. Children in pre-primary to grade 6 in schools that are within these higher-risk communities, will be offered up to two applications of fluoride varnish per school year. Having a variety of ways to access the preventative benefits of fluoride is an important strategy for improving population health. Public Health's Fluoride Varnish Program complements other oral health programs and ways that children currently access and receive fluoride.

We are very clear with parents/guardians that this program does not replace regular check-ups or fluoride treatments by a dentist, dental hygienist or other community oral health care program and does not provide a complete oral health exam. Parents may receive a note recommending they follow-up with their dental provider for an assessment. If urgent issues are observed, defined as pain, abscess or swelling, parents/guardians will receive a follow up phone call and/or letter from the Dental Hygienists to seek immediate care. At that time, we will help navigate families to the appropriate service.

Schools where a Fluoride Varnish Program will be offered are contacted by their local Public Health Dental Hygienist to coordinate its implementation. Parents/guardians are provided with an information package, including a consent form that must be signed and returned for students to participate. You may receive questions regarding the program. Attached is an infographic that you can share with your staff/clinic so that others know about the program.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your nearest Public Health Dental Hygienist using the contact information provided. We are pleased to be a key partner in supporting good oral health for children in Nova Scotia and invite you to join us in promoting and supporting this important program.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,



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