

# Public Health's Fluoride Varnish Program

Oral health is essential to overall health at every age and stage of life. For children, poor oral health can impact growth and development, behavior, and their ability to learn, socialize and play.

Nova Scotia Health, Public Health, works collaboratively with partners across school, community, government, and health to improve oral health outcomes for children. As part of our work to advance Health Promoting Schools in Nova Scotia, this includes offering a fluoride varnish program to pre-primary and elementary-aged children in identified communities throughout the province.



## Why Fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that helps to strengthen teeth and prevent dental decay (cavities). There are several ways that children in Nova Scotia currently receive fluoride. Fluoride is found in most dental products (such as toothpaste), may be applied to teeth through a dental provider, and is available in some communities through public water supplies that add safe amounts of fluoride.

## Why a School-Based Fluoride Program?

School-based fluoride programs are offered in many jurisdictions across Canada because they are a safe and effective way to deliver additional fluoride to elementary-aged children. In Nova Scotia, Public Health has been offering a fluoride program in schools since 1998.

## Why a Fluoride Varnish Program?

In 2023-24, Public Health will transition to a fluoride varnish program that will be delivered twice a year in schools by Public Health Dental Hygienists.

Fluoride varnish is easy and quick to apply to teeth and is well accepted by children. This new delivery method will reduce the time commitment for students and help to minimize classroom disruptions compared to the previous weekly, volunteer delivered, fluoride mouth rinse program.

## How does the Fluoride Varnish Program work?

Schools where a fluoride varnish program will be offered are contacted by their local Public Health Dental Hygienist to organize and arrange the program. Parents/guardians are provided with an information package, including a consent form that must be signed and returned for students to participate. Public Health Dental Hygienists visit the school twice a year to apply fluoride varnish to student's teeth. A small amount of varnish will be applied to visible surfaces of teeth using a small disposable brush. Varnish is applied quickly and only takes a few seconds to harden.

## Improving Children's Oral Health

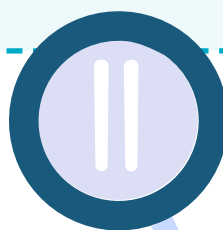


Improving children's oral health in Nova Scotia requires a combination of cavity prevention initiatives. **Nova Scotia's Children's Oral Health Program** is available to the entire population and covers the costs of fluoride applications for children through a dental provider. Public Health's Fluoride Varnish Program is directed to communities that would benefit from an additional layer of protection. Both strategies are needed to

move everyone in a population towards better oral health.

Public Health's Fluoride Varnish Program complements other oral health programs and ways that children currently access and receive fluoride. The program offers two additional applications of fluoride varnish to pre-primary and elementary-aged children in identified communities.

## Did you know?



57%

57% of Canadian Children have cavities. Dental decay (cavities) is the most common and preventable chronic health condition of childhood. Cavities can lead to unnecessary infection, pain, and tooth loss.



Oral health impacts education outcomes. Children with cavities and worse oral health report lower school attendance and performance rates.



Treatment of dental problems is the leading cause of day surgery (under general anaesthesia) in Canada among children under the age of 5. It occurs more than ear tube placement and tonsil removal.



Dental surgeries make up some of the most frequent uses of pediatric operating room time in N.S.

