

# First Tooth: Oral Health Practices for Early Childhood Programs

## FAQ's



### Should I use the training toothpaste?

Training toothpaste should not be used for children as long as they are only using a smear of toothpaste. Even ingesting toothpaste, as long as it is just a very small amount, is not harmful for children. The U.S. Preventative Services task Force now recommends that all children, regardless of caries risk, use fluoridated toothpaste twice daily.

### How much toothpaste should I use?

Children under age 2 should use a smear of toothpaste, ages 2-6 should use a half-pea sized amount of toothpaste, and children over 6 through adults should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

### Do I need to use something to clean the mouth before the teeth come in?

Even before the first tooth erupts, it is important to wipe the mouth out after feedings with a soft cloth or extra soft small toothbrush to remove residual milk, formula, or food from the baby's mouth.

### My baby uses the bottle to go to sleep, how do I break this habit?

It is important that a baby does not go to bed with a bottle. Try feeding the baby with milk or formula, then substituting with warm water just as the child goes to sleep.

### How much fluoride is too much?

If a child is taking daily fluoride supplements or drinking fluoridated water, it is still ok for them to use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste; encourage spitting out the toothpaste. The small amount that would be swallowed would not be harmful.

Fluoride varnish should be applied four times a year to those children at high risk of caries and two times a year to those at low risk of caries.

How frequently can varnish be applied? (If the child went to the dentist, last week or 2 weeks ago and had it applied, is it okay?)

Yes - it is okay if the varnish is applied again after 1-2 months. If it's been 1-2 weeks or so, we likely wouldn't apply it again unless the child has beginning signs of cavities or active untreated cavities.

**A more detailed explanation:**

If a child has had a fluoride application in the last few weeks, we usually do not apply it at the time of our visit. However, if the child has white spot lesions/lines on the teeth that are beginning signs of cavities, or if they have untreated cavities, it is evidence based to apply the varnish more frequently to try to arrest the cavity, and we likely would apply it again. Each expanded practice dental hygienist will make an overall assessment of the child's oral health status when making the decision to apply the varnish again if we are informed that the child has recently received varnish elsewhere.