



## Q & A for Medical Providers



### **What is Cavity Free Iowa?**

Cavity Free Iowa was initiated in 2017 to increase the number of children ages 0-35 months who receive oral screening, anticipatory guidance, and fluoride varnish in medical practices. Because young children often see their primary care provider on a more routine basis and at a younger age than they see a dentist, the goal of Cavity Free Iowa is to increase oral health awareness and improve the oral health and overall health of patients. Through this program, local I-Smile™ coordinators (dental hygienists) can provide onsite training for pediatric and family practice clinic staff and also assist with referrals for children needing dental care.

### **Why is fluoride varnish beneficial to my patients? And is it safe?**

Research indicates that when fluoride varnish is used early, it can reduce decay by 18-25% in children. Fluoride varnish is easy to apply and does not require a professional dental cleaning prior to application. Because only a minimal amount is used and it dries immediately upon contact with saliva, fluoride varnish is safe and well-tolerated by infants, young children, and individuals with special needs. Fluoride varnish is endorsed by the American Dental Association and recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

### **What patients should receive fluoride varnish?**

The focus of Cavity Free Iowa is children ages 0 – 35 months; however fluoride varnish should be applied to all children at moderate to high risk for tooth decay as soon as the first tooth erupts. Examples of children at moderate to high-risk includes those with existing decay or fillings, having parents or siblings with a history of decay, being of low socio-economic status, and those with a high-sugar/high-carbohydrate diet or lack of access to community water fluoridation.

### **Who can apply the fluoride varnish?**

A physician or nurse practitioner can apply the varnish or delegate its application to any appropriate clinic staff (if application is within their scope of practice). In many cases, the varnish may be applied by a nurse or medical assistant at the same time immunizations are provided.

### **How often should the fluoride varnish be applied?**

Fluoride varnish is most effective when applied every 90 days. In addition to varnish applications at dental visits every 6 months, a fluoride application at every well-child visit is recommended for children at moderate to high risk for tooth decay.

### **How are medical clinics reimbursed for this service?**

Fluoride varnish application is reimbursed by Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and by some private insurers. For Medicaid-eligible children 0 – 35 months, a fluoride varnish is paid at \$13.95 for physicians and \$11.86 for nurse practitioners using CPT code 99188 (at least 90 days apart); the oral screening is part of the well-child exam reimbursement. Private insurance coverage varies, and providers should contact the carriers directly for payment guidelines.

### **What is the cost of fluoride varnish?**

A single application of fluoride varnish costs approximately \$1.00/child. Fluoride varnish can be ordered through dental supply companies (a list of companies is available through your local I-Smile Coordinator).

Cavity Free Iowa is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Public Health and Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. For more information, contact your I-Smile Coordinator: <http://ismile.idph.iowa.gov/>

AAP Resource: [www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-recommends-fluoride-to-prevent-dental-caries.aspx](http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-recommends-fluoride-to-prevent-dental-caries.aspx)