

## Oral Health in Primary Care

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The goal is to reduce the incidence of early childhood tooth decay by:

- Increasing oral risk assessments by primary care clinicians (PCCs)
- Increasing rates of dental varnishing
- Linking children to a dental home (recommended by age 1 & throughout childhood and adolescence)

### Key Points

- **What is Dental Varnishing?** Dental varnishing is a topical fluoride application that is applied to erupted teeth in the primary care setting. The visit also includes oral evaluation and parent/caregiver education. Physicians and nurses may apply the varnish.
- **Why should PCCs Varnish? Access:** The AAP recommends “every child should have a dental home established by 1 year of age.” The reality is that 89% of children in this age group see a physician at least once yearly while only 1.5% sees a dentist. This points to the importance of a **risk assessment screen** in primary care.
- **Frequency?** Fluoride varnish can be applied to infants and toddlers teeth up to **6 times by age 3 ½ or through age 41 months**. Application can take place during well or sick visits and at an optimal frequency of every 3-4 months (minimum of 60-day interval between procedures).
- **Evidence?** Research shows that children having 4 or more varnishings before their 3rd birthday have the most benefit by reducing cavities and the need for dental fillings.

### Screening & Referrals

Evidence of screening and appropriate dental referral are components of the Into the Mouths of Babes program. The following are approved screening tools:

- NC Priority Oral Risk Assessment and Referral Tool (PORRT)
- Bright Futures Oral Health Risk Assessment Tool

### Billing, Coding & Payment

Dental Varnish Visit:

- **D0145:** Oral Evaluation & Counseling to Caregiver
- **D1206:** Application of Dental Varnish

### Metrics

- Annual Dental Visits (proxy for dental home)
- Varnishing: 4 or more by 42 months of age

**The goal is to reduce the incidence of early childhood tooth decay in North Carolina by assessing for oral risk in primary care, applying varnish, and linking children to a dental home.**