



Topical Fluoride Varnish for Children (TFL-CH)

CalOptima Health created this summary to provide guidance to clinicians for optimizing their performance on Topical Fluoride Varnish Application in Children.

Assessing the Application of Topical Fluoride Varnish

The Topical Fluoride Varnish measure assesses the percentage of children ages 1- 20 who received at least two topical fluoride varnish applications with a medical or dental provider within the measurement year: January 1 – December 31. Fluoride applications must be provided on two different dates of service.

Why Should Providers Apply Fluoride Varnish?

Young children in their first few years of life are seen earlier and more frequently by a medical provider than by a dentist. Low-income children are at higher risk for early dental decay (cavities) caused by dental caries. Topical Fluoride varnish is effective in preventing dental decay. Physicians and other qualified health care professionals can play a vital role in a child's oral health by applying topical fluoride varnish for children in the office.

Clinical Recommendations

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)/Bright Futures Periodic Schedule recommends fluoride varnish application at least once every 6 months for all children and every 3 months for children at high risk for dental caries and recommends primary care providers apply fluoride varnish in the office for children through age 5 years. The U.S. Prevention Service Task Force (USPSTF) recommends primary care clinicians applying fluoride varnish to primary teeth of all infants and children periodically starting at the age of primary tooth eruption through 5 years of age.

Get Credit for Applying Topical Fluoride

Primary care providers or health care professionals applying topical fluoride in an office setting are recommended to use CPT 99188.

Code Class	Code	Description
CPT	99188	Application of topical fluoride varnish by a physician or other qualified health care professional

Use of this code should be appropriate to the service rendered and follow billing guidelines.

Note: Topical Fluoride Varnish does not require prior authorization. The application of fluoride is payable as a full mouth treatment, regardless of the number of teeth treated. For CCN members, CalOptima Health provides fee for service reimbursement at \$23.22 per fluoride varnish treatment. For Health Network members, please check fluoride varnish reimbursement details with the health network.

Tips for Success

- Apply Fluoride varnish in the office at least twice during the measurement year for all young children 1-5 years of age and children who do not have a dental home. Documentation of service with different dates of service must be reflected in the medical record.
- Make sure to submit appropriate CPT code for fluoride varnish application on claims and encounters.
- Assess at every visit whether the child has a dental home. Children with no dental home should be provided with a referral for dental services and counseled on the importance of dental hygiene and oral health issues associated with poor dental health.
 - To assist members with finding a dental home, visit:
<https://dental.dhcs.ca.gov/find-a-dentist/home>

Sources

1. Bright Futures/American Academy of Pediatrics Coding for Pediatric Preventive Care 2022.
<https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/Coding%20Preventive%20Care.pdf>
2. Bright Futures/American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for Preventative Pediatric Health Care https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf
3. United States Preventive Services Task Force guidelines can be found:
<https://www.uspreventionsservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/prevention-of-dental-caries-in-children-younger-than-age-5-years-screening-and-interventions1>

For questions about the content in this guide, email CalOptima Health at QI_Initiatives@caloptima.org.

