



## MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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### Fluoride varnish helps fight tooth decay



*Shelley Treynor (right) plays peek-a-boo with Carmina Guerrero after applying fluoride varnish to her teeth.*

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns MI- Shelley Treynor, Registered Dental Hygienist and Mid-Michigan District Health Department's Oral Health Coordinator, loves kids and she loves her job.

As a mother and a dental professional, Treynor knows the important role that good oral health plays in the overall wellness of a child. She knows that cavities can cause pain and prevent kids from eating, speaking, sleeping and learning. She knows that tooth decay is one of the most common diseases in children and that kids as young as one can and do get cavities. She's seen the devastating effects that poor dental health can have on a child, but she also knows that tooth decay in children is preventable.

Good brushing and flossing habits are obviously critical to having a healthy mouth, but Treynor wants parents to know that there are a number of other steps they can take to make sure their child has a smile to last a lifetime.

"I can't stress enough how important it is for parents to encourage healthy meal, snack and drink choices and to limit sugary foods and drinks, like juice and soda," she said. "Parents can also help fend off tooth decay by not sending their kids to bed with a bottle and making sure their kids visit a dentist by their first birthday."

Treynor sees a fair amount of decay in the youngest of mouths and wants parents to know that when it comes to protecting their child's teeth, they have one more weapon at their disposal: fluoride varnish treatments.

Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is "painted" on the teeth with a small disposable brush. The coating makes the outer layer, or the enamel, harder, helping to prevent cavities and stop cavities that have already started. The process is quick, painless, safe and effective.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department relies on Treynor to apply just under 900 fluoride varnish treatments each year to eligible children in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties. Fluoride varnish is recommended for children of all ages, including infants, but the health department's program focuses on kids in Early Head Start, Head Start and those in the WIC program.

According to Treynor, most all kids benefit from fluoride varnish treatments, but they are especially beneficial for those who are at-risk for dental decay or live in communities without fluoridated water.

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## 2- Fluoride Varnish Program

Treynor says most parents are very thankful for the free fluoride varnish program, which also includes a dental screening to check for signs of decay, as well as parent education and resources.

There is no charge to receive fluoride treatments through the health department and the Varnish! Michigan program. If a child is covered by Medicaid or other dental insurance, their insurance company may be billed. Otherwise, grant funds cover the cost.

If your child is not eligible to participate in the fluoride varnish program through the Health Department, Treynor recommends checking with your dentist to see if it is something they offer.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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