

# BENEFIT NEWS

WVCH: Dental Sealant and Fluoride Varnish Differences

March 1, 2019

## What is the difference between a dental sealant, Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) and a fluoride varnish? Are they the same? Are they interchangeable? Our Dental partner's have provided a great resource to understand the differences.

**Dental Sealants:** Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings placed on the back teeth to prevent cavities. It is recommended that all back teeth (molars) have sealants applied as soon as they erupt (typically between ages 6-14). Sealants can be applied by dentists, hygienists or certified dental assistants.

**Fluoride Varnish:** Fluoride varnish is a concentrated form of fluoride, which is applied to the tooth's surface. The temporary coating helps protect against cavities. Fluoride varnish can be applied by dentists, hygienists or certified dental assistants. It can also be applied by trained medical staff.



**Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF):** SDF is a medicine painted on early cavities to stop them from growing. Cavities that are stopped with SDF will turn dark – this shows the medicine is working. Teeth without cavities will not change color. The dark area of the tooth can be covered by a filling if necessary. Patients should not have SDF treatment if allergic to silver. SDF can be applied by dentists, hygienists or certified dental assistants.

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*"I always encourage my patients to seek dental care as part of their overall preventive care. Oral health contributes to a patients overall health."*

- WVCH Provider

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### Importance of Preventive Dental Care:

A cavity is caused by a bacterial infection and is preventable. According to the Strategic Plan for Oral Health in Oregon: 2014-2020, roughly 62% of children and pregnant women across the state are not receiving dental care at the appropriate time in their development. The result is high incidence of cavities, particularly for vulnerable populations that do not engage in dental care in a traditional setting. To help combat this problem, many preventive dental services are now provided by dental professionals in schools and other community settings - as well as in the dental office. The differences between these preventive services however are not well known outside the dental world. Therefore, below are some examples of common preventive services that dental patients may receive in the dental office and/or in the community setting.

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## Sealants and Fluoride Varnish Together Can Help Prevent Tooth Decay.

### What is Dental Sealant?

- Sealants are less expensive than a filling.
- Sealants may last many years and are checked at regular dental visits.
- Sealants are easy to apply and require no needles or drills.

### What is Fluoride Varnish?

- It strengthens tooth enamel and can help prevent dental decay.
- The fluoride varnish is flavored.
- Easy to apply and dries quickly.
- Can be applied in any setting; school, health center, medical office, and dental office.

### Why Do Kids Need Fluoride?

- Tooth decay (a cavity) is the most common childhood disease.
- U.S. children miss over 51 million hours of school because of dental problems.
- Tooth decay is a common preventable disease.
- Cavities in baby and permanent teeth can cause pain and prevent children from eating, speaking, sleeping, and learning properly.
- It is important to protect both primary (baby) teeth and permanent teeth.
- Children don't lose all of their primary teeth until age 12 or older.

Resource Information provided by:  
Our dental plan partners Advantage Dental, Capitol Dental, and ODS

## Questions:

Contact WVCH Customer Service 503-584-2150.

OR if the patient knows what dental plan they are on you can contact them directly.

Advantage Dental Member Services—866-268-9631

Capitol Dental Member Services—800-525-6800

ODS Member Services—800-342-0526