

# Topical Fluoride for Children (TFL-CH)

**Learn how to improve your HEDIS<sup>1</sup> rates. This tip sheet gives key details about the TFL-CH measure, best practices, codes and other resources.**

<b>Measure</b>	<p>The percentage of children ages 1 - 21 years who received at least two topical fluoride applications within the reporting year as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dental OR oral health services<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Dental services</li> <li>• Oral health services</li> </ul>										
<b>Eligible members</b>	<p>Children aged 1 - 20 years as of December 31 of the measurement year. Report eight age stratifications and a total rate:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Ages 1 to 2</td><td>Ages 10 to 11</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ages 3 to 5</td><td>Ages 12 to 14</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ages 6 to 7</td><td>Ages 15 to 18</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ages 8 to 9</td><td>Ages 19 to 20</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Total ages 1 through 20</td></tr> </table>	Ages 1 to 2	Ages 10 to 11	Ages 3 to 5	Ages 12 to 14	Ages 6 to 7	Ages 15 to 18	Ages 8 to 9	Ages 19 to 20	Total ages 1 through 20	
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<b>Allowable gap</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more than one gap in continuous enrollment of up to 31 days during the measurement year.</li> <li>• To determine continuous enrollment of a beneficiary for whom enrollment is verified monthly, the child may not have more than a single one-month gap in coverage.</li> </ul>										
<b>Best practices</b>	<p>American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)/Bright Futures recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluoride varnish application at least once every six months for all children and every three months for children at high risk for dental caries.</li> <li>• Performing oral health risk assessments on all children at every routine well-visit beginning at 6 months of age.</li> <li>• Recommend use of fluoridated toothpaste starting at eruption of the first tooth: rice-grain sized amount for children younger than 3 years, and a pea-sized amount for most children starting at 3 years of age.</li> </ul>										

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## Best practices

United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends:

- Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) prescribe oral fluoride supplementation starting at 6 months for children whose water supply is deficient in fluoride. To find out what public water is fluoridated by region, refer to:  
[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html)
- PCPs apply fluoride varnish to the primary teeth of all infants and children starting at the age of primary tooth eruption.

Other Recommendations:

- Remind parents that bottled water is generally not fluoridated.
- Flyer for parents: <https://smilecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SMILE-CA-Fluoride-Infographic-ENG.pdf>
- Check with parents if member has received a topical fluoride treatment within the last six months prior to current visit.

## Helpful coding tips

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- Administrative enrollment and claims data is required within the reporting year for measurement.

Medical Record Documentation

- Documentation is required of at least two instances on different dates of service.
- If the parent reports their child already received topical fluoride at a dental visit, this can be documented in the patient's medical history.

Who can bill for varnish application? How many times per year will I be reimbursed for applying varnish?

- Application of topical fluoride varnish by a physician or other qualified healthcare professional is reimbursable with CPT code 99188 for children 0 to 5 years of age, up to three times a year.

Who can apply topical fluoride in California?

- Fluoride varnish must be applied by a physician or other qualified health care professional, a clinic staff member who works under the supervision of a qualified health care professional, or other allied health providers who have completed one of the recommended online fluoride varnish trainings.

## Code sets

### TOPICAL FLUORIDE CPT® II/CDT CODES\*

Description	CPT II/CDT Code
Application of topical fluoride varnish by a physician or other qualified health care professional	CPT: 99188
Professionally applied fluoride varnish	CDT: D1206

<sup>1</sup> HEDIS – Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set.

<sup>2</sup> Members may receive topical fluoride application from “non-dental” providers, such as medical primary care providers.

## Supplemental resources

### Child Oral Health Training

- Smiles for Life: <https://www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.org/courses/child-oral-health/>
- Open Wide: <https://www.mchoralhealth.org/OpenWide/index.php>

### Training Videos

- University of California San Francisco: Fluoride Varnish Training
- <https://oralhealthsupport.ucsf.edu/content/fluoride-varnish-training-promotional-video-non-medical-providers-include-fluoride-varnish>

### Smiles for Life: National Oral Health Curriculum

- <https://youtu.be/ARkehLHmb44>

## Resources

Dental Quality Alliance Technical Specifications: NQF #2528, #3700, #3701

- [https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/dqa/dental-quality-measures/2023-measures/2023\\_dqa\\_d\\_o\\_do\\_topical\\_fluoride.pdf](https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/dqa/dental-quality-measures/2023-measures/2023_dqa_d_o_do_topical_fluoride.pdf)

Dental Quality Alliance User Guide for Pediatric Measures Calculated Using Administrative Claims Data

- [https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/dqa/dental-quality-measures/2023-measures/2023\\_dqa\\_pediatric\\_measures\\_user\\_guide\\_final.pdf](https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/dqa/dental-quality-measures/2023-measures/2023_dqa_pediatric_measures_user_guide_final.pdf)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Medicaid & CHIP Technical Assistance Resource, March 2023

- <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/quality-of-care/downloads/dentaloralhealth-ta-resource.pdf>

DHCS Medi-Cal Provider Manual Update, February 2023

- <https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/masters-mtp/part2/dental.pdf>

United States Preventive Services Task Force. Final Recommendation Statement. Prevention of Dental Caries in Children Younger than 5 Years: Screening and Interventions

- <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/prevention-of-dental-caries-in-children-younger-than-age-5-years-screening-and-interventions1>

American Academy of Pediatrics/Bright Futures: Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care

- <https://www.aap.org/periodicityschedule>