

Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles



Using Silver Diamine Fluoride on Children's Teeth

Silver diamine fluoride (SDF) can stop tooth decay and prevent it from getting worse. SDF is a liquid that is applied to one or more teeth with a small brush. The treatment is quick and painless with no needles or drills needed.



Why is early oral health care important for children?

- Tooth decay is the most common preventable disease in children.
- Children as young as age 6 to 12 months can get tooth decay.
- Untreated tooth decay can cause pain and infection that may lead to problems eating, speaking, sleeping, and learning.
- A child may need braces to fix spacing problems in their permanent teeth if their primary (baby) teeth are lost too early because of tooth decay.

What are the benefits of SDF?

- Dentists, physicians, and other qualified health professionals can apply SDF.
- SDF is a good option for children who
 - Are afraid of dental visits and tools, like needles and drills.
 - Have trouble cooperating with dental staff—for example, children who cannot sit still and some children with disabilities.
 - Need two or more dental visits to treat tooth decay.



Untreated tooth decay.

- SDF is easy to apply and takes less time than placing a dental filling.

What does a tooth look like after SDF is applied?

- SDF stains the area with tooth decay black, and that area will stay black. Tooth surfaces without decay will not be stained.
- If SDF is applied to a child's primary tooth, the permanent tooth that replaces it will not be stained.
- If the stain is a concern, it can be covered with a tooth-colored filling.

Can teeth treated with SDF continue to decay?

- How well SDF works depends on the size and location of the decay. Teeth with large areas of decay and back teeth may be difficult to treat with SDF. It is possible for these areas to continue to decay after SDF treatment.
- Teeth treated with SDF should be checked every 6 to 12 months. If tooth decay is still present, SDF can be reapplied, or a filling may be needed.



Tooth decay treated with SDF.

This resource is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$8,200,000 with 100% funded by ACF. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF/HHS or the U.S. Government.

Page 2 photos courtesy of Jeanette MacLean, D.D.S., Affiliated Children's Dental Specialists, Glendale, Arizona.



National Center on
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety