

## USPSTF urges docs to help prevent tooth decay in young children

December 7 2021

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(HealthDay)—The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)

recommends that primary care clinicians take steps to prevent cavities in young children, many of whom may not visit a dentist. The final recommendation statement is published in the Dec. 7 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Roger Chou, M.D., from the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, and colleagues updated the 2014 review on dental caries screening and preventive interventions to inform the USPSTF. Thirty-two studies, with 106,694 participants, were included. None of the studies examined the effects of primary care screening on clinical outcomes. In higher-risk populations or settings, topical fluoride compared with placebo or no topical fluoride was associated with reduced caries burden and a reduced likelihood for incident caries, with no increase in fluorosis risk.

Based on the current evidence, the USPSTF concludes with moderate certainty that for children 6 months and older whose water supply is deficient in fluoride, there is a moderate net benefit for oral fluoride supplementation at recommended doses for preventing future dental caries (B recommendation). The USPSTF also concludes with moderate certainty that for all children younger than 5 years, fluoride varnish application has a moderate net benefit for preventing future dental caries (B recommendation).

"Primary care clinicians have an important role in helping to prevent cavities in children under 5 years old," a task force member said in a statement. "By applying fluoride varnish starting when children's teeth first come in, and prescribing fluoride supplements for [children](#) with low [fluoride](#) in their water supply, clinicians can help keep their young patients' teeth healthy."

**More information:** [Evidence Report](#)  
[Final Recommendation Statement](#)

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