

DENTAL SEALANTS

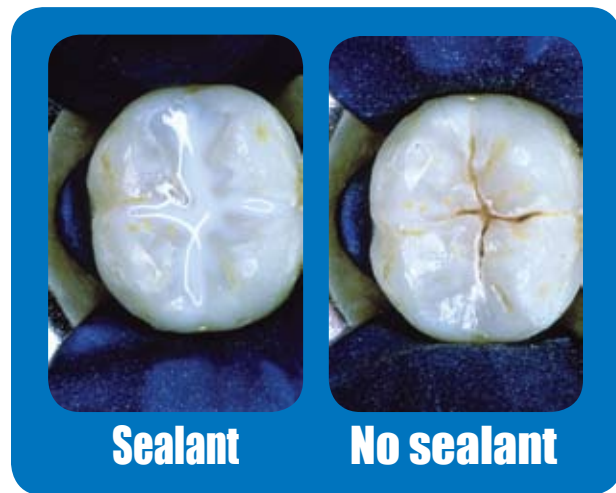
What are dental sealants?

Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings that are applied to the grooves on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth (molars) to protect them from tooth decay. Sealants keep bacteria and food particles out of the grooves in the teeth.

How are sealants applied?

Applying sealants is quick and easy. The tooth is cleaned, and a special gel is placed on the chewing surface for a few seconds. The tooth is then washed off and dried, and the sealant is painted on the tooth. The dental professional also may shine a light on the tooth to help harden the sealant.

It takes about a minute for the sealant to form a protective shield. Children can eat or drink immediately after the sealant procedure is done.



How long do sealants last?

A sealant can last for as long as five to 10 years. They can be reapplied if they are no longer in place.

Does my child really need sealants?

Sealants protect the teeth from decay (cavities) and can prevent the need for dental fillings. Once decay is present, it can permanently damage your child's teeth. Sealants can save time, money and the discomfort sometimes associated with fillings.

Will my child feel or see the sealants?

Your child may feel the sealant with their tongue after it is first placed on their tooth, but sealants are very thin and your child will quickly adjust to them. Sealants only can be seen up close. They usually are not seen when a child smiles or talks.

Does my child need to do anything else to prevent tooth decay after he or she has a sealant?

Sealants protect the chewing surfaces of the teeth, but regular dental visits and good oral hygiene still are needed to protect the other parts of the teeth, the gums and the mouth. Children should brush their teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, floss once a day, make wise food and drink choices, and visit a dental professional twice a year.

For more information about dental care for your child, contact:

Oral Health Program

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