

# DENTAL SEALANTS

## What are dental sealants?

A dental sealant is thin plastic material that is applied to the grooves and pits on the chewing surfaces of the teeth (premolars and molars) to protect them from tooth decay (cavities). Six-year and 12-year molars are the most common teeth to be sealed; however, other teeth with pits and grooves can be sealed too. Sealants keep bacteria and food particles out of the grooves in the teeth.

## How are dental 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 dental sealants last?

Dental sealants can last for years, but they need to be checked regularly to make sure they are not chipped or worn away. Sealants can be reapplied if they are no longer in place.

## Should my child receive dental sealants?

Sealants protect the teeth from decay 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 that is sometimes associated with fillings.

## Will my child feel or see the dental 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 dental sealant?

Sealants protect the chewing surfaces of the teeth, but regular dental visits and good oral hygiene are needed to protect the other parts of the teeth, gums and mouth. Children should brush their teeth at least twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride, 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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