



# DENTAL SEALANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

## What are dental sealants?

Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings which are applied to the chewing surfaces of the molars (back teeth). Most tooth decay in children and teens occurs on these surfaces. Sealants cover the chewing surfaces to prevent decay.

## Which teeth are suitable for sealants?

The teeth most likely to get decay are the ones with grooves, so the most important teeth to seal are the permanent molars. Children in 2nd grade usually have four permanent teeth to be sealed, two on the top and two on the bottom in the very back. Many 6th graders may have four additional teeth to be sealed.

## How are sealants applied?

The application of a sealant is quick and painless. The tooth is cleaned and dried, a liquid is applied so the sealant will stick to the tooth better, the tooth is rinsed and dried, the sealant is painted on, and a special light is used to harden the sealant. Your child is able to eat immediately after the sealant is applied.

## What are the benefits of sealants?

Most cavities start on back teeth in the small narrow grooves. Germs can hide around your teeth increasing the risk of cavities. Teeth are at risk for cavities and need protection. Dental sealants can provide this protection.



## Can tooth decay occur beneath sealants?

Sealants prevent decay-causing germs from getting the food that they need to live. As a result, decay is not likely to progress, even if some germs are trapped under the sealant.



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## How long will sealants last?

Research shows that sealants can last for many years if the teeth are taken care of. Your child's teeth will be protected through the most decay prone years. The sealants will last longer if your child takes good care of their teeth.

## Will sealants replace fluoride?

No, fluorides, in toothpaste, and mouthwash also help to prevent decay and should be continued in daily mouth care. Fluoride works best on the smooth surfaces of teeth. The chewing surfaces on the back teeth, however, have tiny grooves where decay often begins. Sealants keep germs out of the grooves by covering them with a safe plastic coating. Sealants and fluorides work together to prevent tooth decay.

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## Are sealants safe and effective?

Yes. Dental sealants have been used for more than 40 years. Clinical studies have shown sealants to be very effective in reducing tooth decay in children. Dental sealants are safe, effective and economical.



*For more information about dental sealants and fluoride varnish or to find a dentist please contact:*

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