

Prevent Decay With Dental Sealants

In addition to good oral hygiene, including brushing and flossing, there are other ways to prevent tooth decay. Dental sealants can help protect your children's teeth by sealing them off from decay-causing bacteria.

What are dental sealants?

Made of plastic, dental sealants are applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to protect tooth enamel from decay-causing bacteria and acids. These sealants fit perfectly into the depressions and grooves (pits and fissures) of your children's teeth, protecting them from decay.



Aren't brushing and flossing enough to protect my child's teeth?

While brushing and flossing help to remove food particles and plaque from the smooth surfaces of teeth, toothbrush bristles often can't reach into teeth's depressions and grooves. However, sealants can protect these areas and prevent food and bacteria from building up.

How long do sealants last?

The risk of decay decreases significantly after sealant application, and as long as the sealant remains intact, the tooth surface will be protected from decay. Sealants hold up well under the force of normal chewing and usually last five to

10 years before a reapplication is needed. During your child's regular dental visits, his or her dentist will check the condition of sealants and reapply them when necessary.

When should dental sealants be applied?

Decay can begin early in life, so children should receive sealants on permanent molars as soon as they erupt—around age 6 for first molars and age 12 for second molars.

Are sealants just for kids?

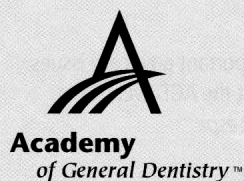
Sealants can protect adults' teeth, too. Ask your dentist whether sealants would be beneficial for you.

Are sealants safe?

Yes. Although in rare cases, some people may have an allergic reaction to the plastic. Prior to receiving any dental treatments, it is important that you talk to your dentist regarding any allergies you or your children may have.

Will my insurance pay for sealants?

Health insurance usually will pay for sealants for children and teenagers' permanent molars. If your dentist suggests sealants for other teeth, he or she will tell you whether or not the costs will be covered. Be sure to check with your dental insurance company about your plan, as coverage may vary.



KnowYourTeeth.com

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The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 35 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at www.2min2x.org.

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