

The risk of decay decreases significantly after sealant application. During your regular dental visits, your dentist will check the condition of the sealants and re-apply them when necessary.

Are sealants safe?

Sealants are extremely safe, though some people may have an allergic reaction to the plastic. Talk to your dentist if you or your children have allergies so that he or she can provide the best treatment options.

Daily oral care is key to keeping your mouth healthy, but sealants may be able to offer you extra protection against tooth decay.

Talk to your dentist about whether sealants are a good option for you.

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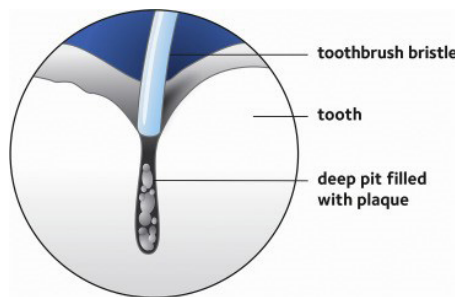
**Dental
Sealants**

Do you know what tooth decay is? When most people talk about tooth decay, they think of a cavity (a hole in your tooth). That is sort of right, but tooth decay actually starts before you get to that point.

Everyone has a coating of bacteria, called plaque, that forms on their teeth. When you eat or drink, those bacteria can turn foods and many sugary beverages into acid. This acid breaks down the hard coating of your teeth called enamel. This is tooth decay. If not caught early, it can develop into a painful cavity.

Why not stop tooth decay in the early stages, or better yet, prevent it in the first place? Dental sealants may help.

What are Dental Sealants?



Dental sealants are a protective coating that your dentist can place over the chewing surfaces of your back teeth.

These areas are at high risk of developing tooth decay.

They are not smooth - they have deep pits and grooves. Your toothbrush cannot get into these areas to keep them clean, so food and plaque can be trapped and easily cause tooth decay.

Your dentist can apply sealants to the chewing surfaces of these teeth to form a barrier over the rough surface.

Sealants go on as a gel-like liquid and then harden into a thin but strong protective coating. Often, your dentist will shine a light on the sealants to help them harden.

Dental sealants usually last for years, but they can become worn. Your dentist can check them during your dental visits to see if they need to be repaired or replaced.

Who can Benefit from Sealants?

We know that children benefit from sealants. Children who have sealants are much less likely to develop tooth decay than children who do not have sealants.

But what about adults?

A review of the research related to sealants could not find any studies of the effect of sealants on tooth decay in adults.

However, a panel of dental experts suggest that sealants may help reduce the risk of tooth decay in this group, too.

Sealants may save you money in the long run by helping to prevent tooth decay, but there may be costs associated with applying them.

Talk to your dentist and check with your medical scheme to see if sealants are covered under your plan.

Why can't I just brush and floss?

While brushing and flossing help to remove food particles and plaque from smooth surfaces of teeth, toothbrush bristles often can't reach into the teeth's depressions and grooves. Sealants protect those areas and prevent food and bacteria from getting in.

How does the dentist apply a sealant?

Your dentist can apply sealants easily, and it takes only a few minutes to seal each tooth.

The dentist first cleans the teeth that will be sealed, which may require the use of a dental drill to open the grooves of the teeth and determine if decay is present.

Then he or she will roughen the chewing surfaces with an acid solution, which will help the sealant stick to the teeth. The dentist then "paints" the sealant on the tooth. It bonds directly to the tooth and hardens. Sometimes your dentist will use a special curing light to help the sealant harden.

Do I still need to Brush my Teeth?

Sealants do not take the place of toothbrushing. They help protect the chewing surfaces of your back teeth, but you still need to brush and clean between your teeth to reduce the risk of tooth decay.

- To take care of your teeth, you should
- brush twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride;
 - clean between your teeth once per day with floss or another interdental cleaner;
 - eat a healthy diet that limits sugary drinks and snacks;
 - see your dentist regularly.

How long do they last?

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 several years before a reapplication is needed.