

Sealants: A Powerful Weapon Against Cavities



Decay in permanent teeth is falling among children, teens, and adults. Dental sealants — thin, plastic coatings that guard teeth from cavities — play a part in that decrease, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC found that 38 percent of children and teens ages 12 to 19 have dental sealants.

Why Use Sealants?

Good brushing and flossing helps remove food particles and plaque from the smooth surfaces of teeth. But your toothbrush bristles cannot reach all the way into the depressions and grooves (called pits and fissures) in some of your teeth to dislodge food and bacteria. These grooves are the number one spot for people to develop cavities. Sealants can protect these vulnerable areas, particularly on the chewing surfaces of your back teeth. Some people also have pits on other teeth where food or bacteria can collect, so those teeth are sometimes sealed as well.

Who Needs Them?

Because baby teeth save space for permanent teeth, it's important to keep them healthy. Some of these teeth may need sealants, particularly if they have deep pits and grooves.

As soon as children's permanent teeth come in, they should get sealants. Children's first permanent molars usually come between ages 5 and 7, and their second permanent molars come in between ages 11 and 14.

Adults can also benefit from sealants. Ask your provider if this could help you.

Getting teeth sealed is an easy and painless process:

- The teeth to be sealed are cleaned.
- The teeth are dried, and cotton is put around them to keep them dry.
- The chewing surfaces are roughened with a solution to help the sealant adhere to the tooth.
- The teeth are rinsed and dried, and new cotton is placed around them.
- Your provider or dental assistant will paint the sealant onto the tooth enamel, where it bond directly to the tooth and hardens.

There is very little discomfort, if any, and your child will be able to eat immediately afterward. Sealants can last for as long as five to 10 years. Ask your child's provider about sealants today!