

Sealants

What Are Sealants: Sealants are a special plastic coating that covers and seals the chewing surfaces of teeth. Sealants act as a barrier protecting tooth enamel from plaque, bacteria, and acid.

The Cause: Our teeth are coated with a sticky film of bacteria called “plaque.” When we consume milk, bread, cookies, candy, soft drinks, cereal, burgers, juice, fruit and many other foods and beverages, some of what we eat sticks to teeth and gums. The plaque bacteria use bits of food and liquids to create acids that attack and destroy tooth enamel. Repeated acid attacks eventually may cause tooth decay. Once decay develops, only a dentist can restore the tooth. Without treatment, further decay can cause pain, infection and tooth loss.

Why Seal Teeth: These procedures are necessary because many teeth have defective occlusal (top) surfaces when they erupt into the mouth. Daily brushing and flossing help remove food particles and bacteria from the smooth surfaces along the sides of and between the teeth. However, pit and fissures along the tops of the teeth are more difficult to keep clean and dental decay (caries) occurs frequently. Toothbrush bristles cannot reach into the microscopic grooves to remove tiny particles of food or plaque.

Who Should Get Sealants: The likelihood of developing tooth decay on the chewing surfaces begins early in life, so children and teenagers are obvious candidates for sealants. Adults also can benefit from sealants, because one never outgrows tooth decay.

What Teeth Should Be Sealed: One of the most common spots for decay to develop is on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth (the premolars and molars). Sealants are recommended for posterior teeth and selected anterior teeth.

Will All Decay Be Prevented: Sealants prevent the majority of decay on the chewing surfaces of the teeth. However, flossing, brushing, and routine fluoride therapy is required to decrease decay initiation on other surfaces of the teeth. Decay may begin between the teeth, even if sealants have been placed, if flossing and brushing are not adequate.

Cost: The cost for sealing a tooth is less than one-half the cost of filling (restoring) the tooth in the event of decay. Further, the sealant does not require anesthetic or cutting of the tooth, which would weaken the tooth.

How Long Do Sealants Last: Studies show sealants last many years. However, occasional resealing may be required - depending on diet and other factors. Sealants are safe and effective in preventing tooth decay. Regular dental visits are important to check the sealant and reapply as necessary. We will reseal or touch-up sealants at no charge for a period of 3 years.