

## WHAT ARE SEALANTS?

Sealants protect the biting surfaces of back teeth against cavities. Back teeth in children have tiny grooves and pits where bacteria cannot be reached with a toothbrush. Most cavities in children occur in these areas. Sealants, made of clear or tooth-colored plastic, can be painted onto the biting surfaces of back teeth to help keep them cavity-free.

## WHY ARE SEALANTS SO IMPORTANT?

Even if your child brushes and flosses carefully, bacteria can still hide in the tiny pits and grooves of the back teeth. When food and bacteria collect in these areas, tooth decay can result. In order to prevent tooth decay, sealants are painted onto the biting surface and effectively “seal out” food and bacteria. This is how sealants reduce the risk of tooth decay.



# DENTAL SEALANTS

## HOW OFTEN MUST SEALANTS BE PLACED?

With proper care and frequent dental check-ups, sealants can last for many years. Most children are protected against cavities throughout their childhood with one application of sealants. However, if your child does not brush or floss, drinks sodas, or bites on hard objects, the sealants will not last as long. Our doctors will check the sealants during your child's dental appointments and recommend repair or replacement when necessary.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PLACE SEALANTS?

Sealants can be applied to your child's teeth in a quick and comfortable appointment, typically in only one visit less than 30 minutes. The teeth must be cleaned and dried before placing the sealant and hardening the material with a special light. The tooth does not have to be numb and there is typically no pain reported during the procedure. Following the appointment, your child will be able to eat right away if necessary.

## ARE SEALANTS EXPENSIVE?

As a measure of prevention provided, sealants are one of the best values in dentistry. Sealants are very affordable, even if they require an out-of-pocket insurance co-pay. Check with our office about the exact cost of sealants for your child and the possibility of insurance coverage for the procedure.

## WHICH TEETH BENEFIT THE MOST FROM SEALANTS?

Teeth with tiny pits and grooves benefit the most from sealants. Typically back teeth on the biting surface, although there are exceptions to this rule. As a general rule of thumb, there are certain teeth that have a higher risk of tooth decay. Permanent premolars, primary molars, and the six-year and twelve-year molars are the teeth which benefit the most from sealants. Every child is unique and your child's treatment plan might include several sealants or no sealants whatsoever. Talk to our doctors for a custom solution to your child's unique situation.

## CAN MY CHILD STOP BRUSHING AND FLOSSING AFTER SEALANTS?

Absolutely not. Sealants are an added layer of protection but they are not “bullet-proof.” Brushing and flossing are important to the success of the sealants and important in preventing tooth decay. Proper nutrition also plays a key role in the lifespan of sealants and the maintenance of a healthy smile. Continue to see the pediatric dentist every 4-6 months, or as directed by your specialist, in order to prevent tooth decay and maximize your investment in sealants.

**As always, if you have questions or concerns, please call our office and we will help! 816-741-5311**