

FISSURE SEALANTS

An increasingly popular treatment in dentistry is making it possible for kids to slip through childhood without a single cavity. When parents ask their dentists what are the best ways to prevent their children from getting cavities, dentists often respond "SEALANTS!"

Kids will still have to brush, floss and visit their dentists.

Reason: The sealant won't reach between the teeth, where cavities often develop. But, sealants can cut molar cavities by more than 50 percent, and can be especially helpful in areas without fluoridated water.

The dental sealant is one of the most revolutionary materials available for protecting our children's teeth. For the past 18 years, a new generation of children have been enjoying the benefits of protective sealants.

HOW DOES A SEALANT HELP PREVENT DECAY?

A sealant is a plastic material that is usually applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth — premolars and molars. This plastic resin bonds into the depressions and grooves (pits and fissures) of the chewing surfaces of back teeth. The sealant acts as a barrier, protecting enamel from plaque and acids. Thorough brushing and flossing help remove food particles and plaque from smooth surfaces of teeth. But toothbrush bristles cannot reach all the way into the depressions and grooves to extract food and plaque. Sealants protect these vulnerable areas by "sealing out" plaque and food. Is sealant application a complicated procedure? Sealants are easy for your dentist to apply, and it takes only a few minutes to seal each tooth.

- The teeth that will be sealed are cleaned.
- Then the chewing surfaces are roughened with an acid solution to help the sealant adhere to the tooth.
- The sealant is then 'painted' onto the tooth enamel, where it bonds directly to the tooth and hardens.
- The fissure sealant is then cured with a special light to help the sealant harden. 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. During your regular dental visits, your dentist will check the condition of the sealants and reapply them when necessary. Sealants are just for kids, right? The likelihood of developing pit and fissure decay begins early in life, so children and teenagers are obvious candidates. But adults can benefit from sealants as well.

