

What are dental sealants and why do you need them?

Dental sealants are plastic coatings. This sealant is put on back teeth to fill in deep grooves. The deep grooves in back teeth are usually too small for the toothbrush to fit into. Food and germs get trapped in these grooves. Over time this can cause tooth decay. These are called cavities. Sealants help keep germs out and keep cavities from forming. Children often do not brush their teeth well. Brushing and sealants help prevent cavities. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry has said that sealants help to prevent cavities.

When should sealants be placed?

A dental sealant should be put on when the child's 6 and 12 year molars come in. This is when the grooves of the tooth can be seen. It should be before the tooth gets a cavity. Sometimes other teeth may also be sealed. It depends on how likely your child is to get cavities.

What is the process of sealing teeth?

1. The teeth are cleaned very well.
2. A special tooth conditioner is applied to the tooth. This creates very fine roughness for the sealant to grip onto.
3. The sealant is painted onto the tooth.
4. A special light is used on the tooth to harden the sealant. It takes just a few seconds.
5. The sealant is checked.

How long do sealants last?

Dental sealants can last a very long time. They can get worn down or chip. Your dentist will check the sealants at every dental checkup to see if they are still in place. If they need a touch-up, another small amount of sealant can be placed.

If you have questions talk to your dentist.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse or clinic if you or your child have any concerns or your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This document was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.