

# DENTAL SEALANTS

A sealant is a protective coating placed on the chewing surface of back teeth to protect against cavities. Permanent back teeth have a significantly higher risk of developing decay as your toothbrush cannot reach the base of the grooves and pits on the biting surface of these teeth to clean them.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **What are Dental Sealants?**

Dental sealants are thin, hard plastic coatings placed in the pits and grooves of teeth. Usually they are needed on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, but other teeth may also develop pits that need to be protected with sealants.

### 2. **Who should have Dental Sealants?**

Dental sealants are most commonly placed on the permanent molars of children. Ideally, this is done shortly after these teeth fully erupt. The first permanent molars erupt around age six and the second permanent molars erupt around age twelve. Dental Sealants can also protect vulnerable pits or grooves on adults' teeth.

### 3. **How do Dental Sealants work?**

The pits and grooves on the back teeth may be too narrow for a toothbrush bristle to reach the base of them. This allows plaque and bacteria to accumulate, which increases the risk of tooth decay. Dental sealants fill those pits and grooves, thus decreasing the risk of tooth decay by preventing the accumulation of plaque and bacteria.

### 4. **How are Dental Sealants placed?**

Placing dental sealants requires no anesthetic or drilling. The teeth must be kept isolated during the procedure. The tooth surface is cleaned and prepared then sealant material is flowed into the pits and grooves. The material either sets by itself or is cured with a light. Your dental professional will check to assure the sealant does not interfere with chewing.

### 5. **What are the risks of Dental Sealants?**

There is very little risk in having dental sealants placed. Rarely, a sealant, will leak and decay will form beneath it. Regular examinations by your dentist allow sealants to be repaired or replaced as needed.

### 6. **What are the risks of not having Dental Sealants placed?**

Without dental sealants, the risk of tooth decay increases significantly in teeth with deep grooves and pits. Once a tooth is decayed, it requires a filling and often becomes weaker due to the loss of sound tooth structure.



Before sealant placement



Preparing the teeth for sealants



After sealant placement