Seal Out Tooth Decay

WHAT IS A SEALANT?
A sealant is a clear or shaded plastic material that is applied to the chewing surfaces of back teeth. This is where decay most often occurs.

WHAT DOES A SEALANT DO?
A sealant prevents tooth decay. It covers the pits and grooves of chewing surfaces and seals out decay-causing food and germs.

HOW IS A SEALANT PLACED?
A sealant is placed by a dental professional. The procedure is simple and painless. It takes only a few minutes. The tooth is cleaned and treated with a solution that allows the sealant to stick to the tooth. Sealants are painted on as a liquid and quickly harden to form a shield over the tooth.

HOW LONG WILL A SEALANT LAST?
Sealants can last for up to 10 years. They can be checked at dental visits to see if they need to be replaced.

WHAT ABOUT FLUORIDE?
Fluoride makes teeth more resistant to decay and can repair tiny areas of early decay before they become big cavities. The most common sources of fluoride are toothpaste or fluoridated water. Both sealants and fluoride are recommended for best protection against tooth decay.

Sealants + Fluoride = Maximum Protection Against Cavities

Side view of narrow groove on top surface of tooth compared to single toothbrush bristle.

Chewing surface of teeth before sealant is applied

Chewing surface of teeth when sealant is applied

Source: Gregory F. George, Look Mom…No Cavities!
Help Your Children be Cavity Free

Children need to have their teeth and gums cleaned daily to prevent tooth decay and gum disease. Parents need to help children learn oral hygiene skills.

**BRUSHING BASICS**
- A parent should supervise brushing for children under age 8.
- Brush twice a day – in the morning and at bedtime.
- A thorough brushing takes 2-3 minutes.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- If you are not sure if your child is at risk for tooth decay, ask a health professional.
- Use a toothbrush moistened with water for children under age 3 when not at risk for tooth decay.

**BEAT SWEETS**
- Encourage healthy snacks.
- Reduce how often snacks are offered, especially sticky foods that cling to teeth.
- Eat sweets at the end of a meal. Increased saliva flow during meals helps reduce the effects of harmful acids.
- Choose milk or water more often than sugary drinks.

**FLOSSING FACTS**
- Flossing helps to prevent gum disease.
- Flossing cleans between teeth and under the gums where the toothbrush cannot reach.

**DENTAL VISITS**
- Visit the dentist regularly – at least once a year.

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**Brush twice a day – in the morning and at bedtime.**

- **Outside**
- **Inside**
- **Tops of Teeth**

Angle brush towards your gums. Gently brush back and forth with short vibrating strokes on all sides of your teeth.

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**Floss once a day. Children younger than 9 will need a parent’s help.**

- **Outside**
- **Inside**
- **Tops of Teeth**

Wrap floss around middle fingers. Use about ½ metre or 18 inches. How to hold floss for top teeth. How to hold floss for bottom teeth. Move floss gently between the teeth and under the gums. Move up and down. Move to the next tooth.