

Seal Out Decay: Dental Sealant Fact Sheet

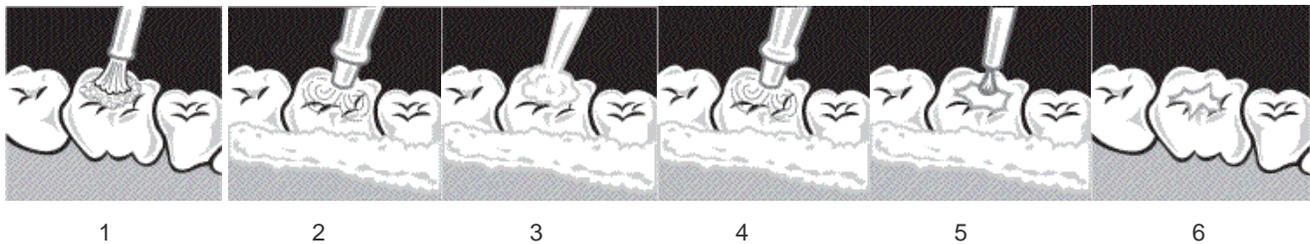
What are dental sealants? Sealants are thin, plastic coatings painted on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Sealants are put on in dentists' offices, clinics, and sometimes in schools. Getting sealants put on is simple and painless. Sealants are painted on as a liquid and quickly harden to form a shield over the tooth.

Why get sealants? The most important reason for getting sealants is to avoid tooth decay. Fluoride in toothpaste and in drinking water protects the smooth surfaces of teeth but back teeth need extra protection. Sealants cover the chewing surfaces of the back teeth and keep out germs and food. Having sealants put on teeth before they decay will also save time and money in the long run by avoiding fillings, crowns, or caps used to fix decayed teeth.

When should teeth be sealed? For maximum benefit, back teeth should be sealed as soon as the biting surface is fully seen in the mouth. This is why dentists and sealant programs target first-graders and fifth-graders—to get sealants on the six- and twelve-year molars as soon as they are in the mouth.

Why do back teeth decay so easily? The chewing surfaces of back teeth are rough and uneven because they have small pits and grooves. It's just the way they are made. Food and germs can get stuck in the pits and grooves and stay there a long time because toothbrush bristles cannot brush them away.

How are sealants put on?



Applying a sealant is a **simple** and **pain free** process. Numbing the tooth **IS NEVER** required.

1.) The tooth is cleaned. 2.) The tooth is dried, and cotton is put around the tooth so it stays dry. 3.) A solution is put on the tooth that makes the surface a little rough. (It is easier for the sealant to stick to a slightly rough surface.) 4.) The tooth is rinsed and dried. Then new cotton is put around the tooth so it stays dry. 5.) The sealant is applied in liquid form and is hardened with a special light (Curing Light). 6. The sealant is in place.

How long do sealants last? Sealants can last up to 10 years. But they need to be checked at regular dental check-ups to make sure they are not chipped or worn away. The dentist or dental hygienist can repair sealants by adding more sealant material or replacing it altogether.

**Sealants are not a guarantee the tooth will never get a cavity!
But, they have a high rate of success to prevent decay.
It is important to have regular dental exams and X-rays.**

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