



Dental Sealants

A Simple and Effective Way to Prevent Cavities

What Are Dental Sealants?

Dental sealants are thin, protective coatings that are applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, known as the **molars** and **premolars**. These teeth contain deep grooves and pits where food particles and bacteria can become trapped, making them more difficult to clean with a toothbrush alone.

Sealants create a smooth protective barrier over these grooves, helping prevent bacteria and food from collecting in these hard-to-reach areas. They are one of the most effective preventive treatments for reducing the risk of cavities on the chewing surfaces of teeth.

Why Are Sealants Important?

The chewing surfaces of molars are especially vulnerable to tooth decay because their natural grooves can be deep and narrow.

Even with regular brushing, toothbrush bristles may not fully clean these areas.

Dental sealants:

- Protect vulnerable tooth surfaces
- Reduce the risk of cavities
- Help preserve healthy tooth structure
- Support long-term oral health

Sealants are a preventive measure—they are designed to stop cavities before they develop.

Who Can Benefit from Dental Sealants?

Children

Children are the primary candidates for dental sealants.

The first permanent molars usually erupt around **6 years of age**, and the second permanent molars typically erupt around **12 years of age**.

Applying sealants soon after these teeth erupt provides protection during the years when children are at the highest risk for cavities.

Teenagers

Teenagers who have permanent molars without fillings or decay can also benefit from sealants, especially if they are at increased risk for tooth decay.

Adults

Some adults may also benefit from sealants if:

- Their molars have deep grooves.
 - They have no existing decay or fillings on those chewing surfaces.
 - Their dentist determines that sealants would provide additional protection.
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How Are Sealants Applied?

Applying dental sealants is:

- Quick
- Safe
- Comfortable
- Completely painless

The procedure usually takes only a few minutes for each tooth.

The steps include:

1. Cleaning the tooth.
2. Drying and preparing the tooth surface.
3. Applying a special conditioning gel.
4. Rinsing and drying the tooth again.
5. Painting the sealant onto the chewing surface.
6. Hardening the sealant using a special curing light.

No drilling or removal of healthy tooth structure is required.

How Long Do Sealants Last?

Dental sealants can protect teeth for **several years**.

During regular dental checkups, your dentist will examine the sealants and repair or replace them if they become chipped or worn.

Good oral hygiene and avoiding habits that may damage teeth can help sealants last longer.

Are Dental Sealants Safe?

Yes.

Dental sealants have been used safely for decades and are supported by extensive scientific research.

The materials used for sealants are carefully evaluated for safety and effectiveness before they are approved for clinical use.

For most patients, the benefits of preventing cavities greatly outweigh any potential risks.

If you have questions about dental materials, discuss them with your dentist.

Do Sealants Replace Brushing?

No.

Sealants protect only the chewing surfaces of certain teeth.

They do **not** replace:

- Brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste
- Daily flossing or other interdental cleaning
- Healthy eating habits
- Regular dental examinations

Good oral hygiene remains essential even after sealants are placed.

Common Questions

Can sealants be placed over small areas of early decay?

In some situations, a dentist may recommend sealing very early, non-cavitated areas that are limited to the enamel. This decision depends on the individual tooth and should be made by a dental professional after a careful examination.

Can adults receive sealants?

Yes.

Although sealants are most commonly recommended for children, adults with healthy molars that have deep grooves may also benefit.

Can sealants fall off?

Over time, sealants may wear down, chip, or partially detach due to normal chewing.

This is why regular dental checkups are important. If necessary, sealants can usually be repaired or replaced quickly.

Preventing Cavities Beyond Sealants

Dental sealants work best as part of a complete preventive care routine.

Protect your teeth by:

- Brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste
- Cleaning between your teeth every day
- Limiting sugary foods and drinks
- Drinking fluoridated water when available
- Visiting your dentist regularly for preventive care

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Dental sealants protect the chewing surfaces of back teeth.
 - ✓ They help prevent cavities before they develop.
 - ✓ Sealants are safe, painless, and quick to apply.
 - ✓ Children benefit most when sealants are placed soon after permanent molars erupt.
 - ✓ Adults with deep grooves may also benefit in some cases.
 - ✓ Sealants complement—but do not replace—good oral hygiene and regular dental care.
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References

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