

# WHY DENTAL SEALANTS ARE IMPORTANT



## Did you know

that tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease? According to statistics, over 50 percent of 5 to 9-year old children have at least one cavity or filling, with the incidence of tooth decay increasing to 78 percent among 17-year-olds. Furthermore, more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness. While these numbers may seem alarming, the truth is that with a good oral hygiene regimen at home and a program of preventive dental care, you can protect your child from tooth decay.



The reason for this is that the deeply grooved chewing surfaces of the back permanent teeth can be difficult for a youngster to keep free of leftover food and cavity-causing bacteria. Children do not always brush their teeth, as often or as thoroughly as they should, making them particularly vulnerable to dental decay.

A healthy smile is essential to your child's comfort, daily function, self image and overall well being. Good dental routines established in youngsters provide a strong foundation for maintaining oral health over the course of a lifetime. However, beyond establishing a good oral hygiene regimen at home and avoiding sticky sweets, a child's teeth can require additional protection.



As part of your child's program of preventive care, your dentist may recommend the application of dental sealants. These thin, plastic-like coatings painted onto the surface of newly erupted permanent back teeth provide your child with additional protection through the cavity-prone years. The value of dental sealants is well documented. According to the American Dental Association, they reduce the risk of cavities in school-age children by approximately 80%. Furthermore, children who do not receive dental sealants develop almost three times more cavities than children who do have them.

Dental sealants offer protection by basically filling in the pits, fissures and grooves on the hard to reach back teeth to seal out harmful bacteria and food particles. Beyond preventing the development of cavities, sealants may also be useful over areas of incipient dental decay to stop further damage from occurring. Applying dental sealants is a relatively quick and painless process. Dental sealants are simply brushed on as a liquid in a series of steps during a child's dental visit and then allowed to harden. Once they are set, dental sealants are strong and durable and can last for several years. Of course, the condition of your child's dental sealants will be evaluated at each checkup and reapplied if the need arises.

Remember, establishing a partnership with the dentist is the best way to help your child develop and maintain a healthy smile for years to come.

