

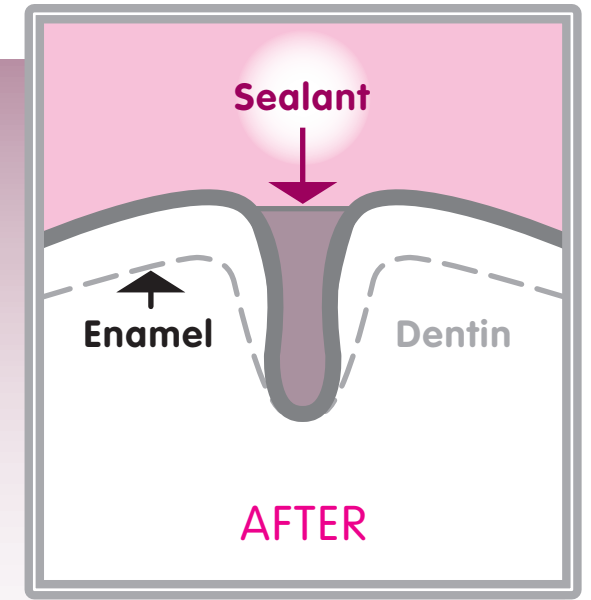
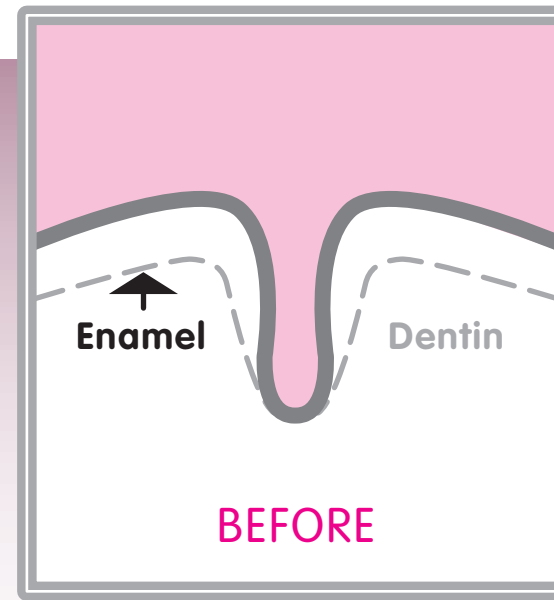
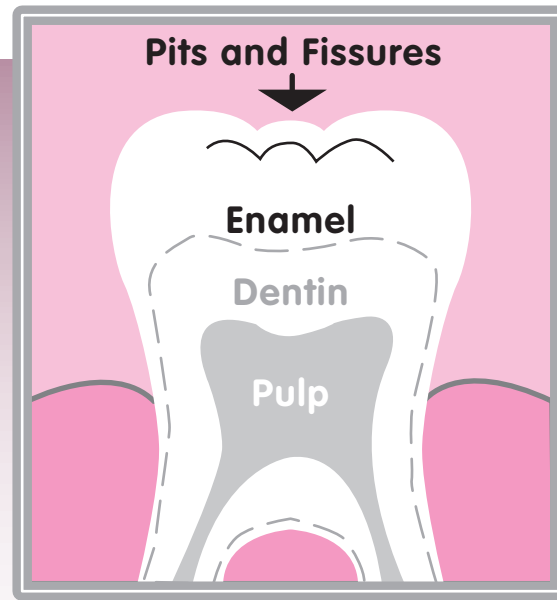
In the past, we commonly treated tooth decay after a cavity had developed. This usually involved drilling away decayed portions of the tooth and filling the cavity with a decay-resistant material.

Today, we know that there are effective ways to prevent tooth decay, such as regular brushing and flossing. Fluorides, either through community water fluoridation or fluoride supplement programs, have been shown to reduce decay significantly. And, a material, called a pit and fissure sealant, can provide more protection against tooth decay when used in combination with brushing and flossing, proper diet and fluorides.

What is a Sealant?

Tooth decay is frequently found on the chewing surfaces of back molar teeth. These surfaces have indentations, called “pits” and fissures.” Since these pits and fissures are so tiny, and since the tooth enamel is very thin in these areas, they make ideal spots in which decay-causing bacteria can become trapped.

A sealant is a thin, plastic coating that is applied as a liquid to the chewing surface of a tooth. This coating adheres to the tooth and hardens to form a protective barrier that seals the pits and fissures of the tooth surface. The sealant is a barrier against decay-causing bacteria.



How is a Sealant Applied?

The procedure is simple and painless.

The teeth to be sealed are cleaned, and the chewing surfaces are prepared with a conditioner. After the teeth are dried, the sealant is applied with a droplet applicator. No tooth material is removed.

Who Should Receive Sealants?

Children, with newly-erupted first or second molar teeth, can benefit most from sealants. First molar teeth generally appear at about six years of age. Second molar teeth usually appear at the age of 12. To work effectively, sealants should be applied as soon as possible after the molars erupt, and before the teeth have had a chance to decay.

What are the Benefits of Sealants?

By forming a thin covering over the pits and fissures, sealants keep out plaque and decrease the risk of decay.

How Long will a Sealant Last?

A single application of a sealant can last as long as five years or even longer. Since the sealant may wear off, or become loose, it must be checked periodically and reapplied, if necessary.

Are Sealants Visible?

Since sealants are only applied to back teeth, they can't be seen when a child smiles or talks. A sealant may be clear, white or tinted.

Will Sealants Make the Teeth Feel Different?

A sealant may be slightly noticeable until normal chewing wears it into place. Since sealants are very thin and only fill the pits and fissures, they will not cause a change in the bite.

Are Sealants Expensive?

The cost of sealing teeth will vary, but it is usually less than the cost of having a tooth filled.

Are Sealants Safe?

Yes. The ingredients in sealant materials are, for the most part, the same as those used in tooth-colored filling materials.

Sealants have been approved by the American Dental Association and have been proven to be safe and effective. They are recommended by the National Institute of Dental Research, the American Public Health Association, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, The American Dental Association, the American Dental Hygienists' Association and numerous other organizations.

Can Decay Occur Beneath Sealants?

Sealants prevent decay-causing bacteria from getting oxygen and nutrients. As a result, decay is not likely to progress, even if some bacteria are trapped under the sealant.

Do Sealants Eliminate the Need for Other Preventive Measures?

No. Sealants are only a part of a child's total dental health care. For complete protection against tooth decay, your child should:

- use fluorides, as directed by the dentist – either in fluoridated water, fluoride supplements, topical fluoride treatments or fluoride mouthrinses and toothpastes;
- brush at least twice a day
- floss every day;
- eat well-balanced meals; and
- visit the dentist every six months

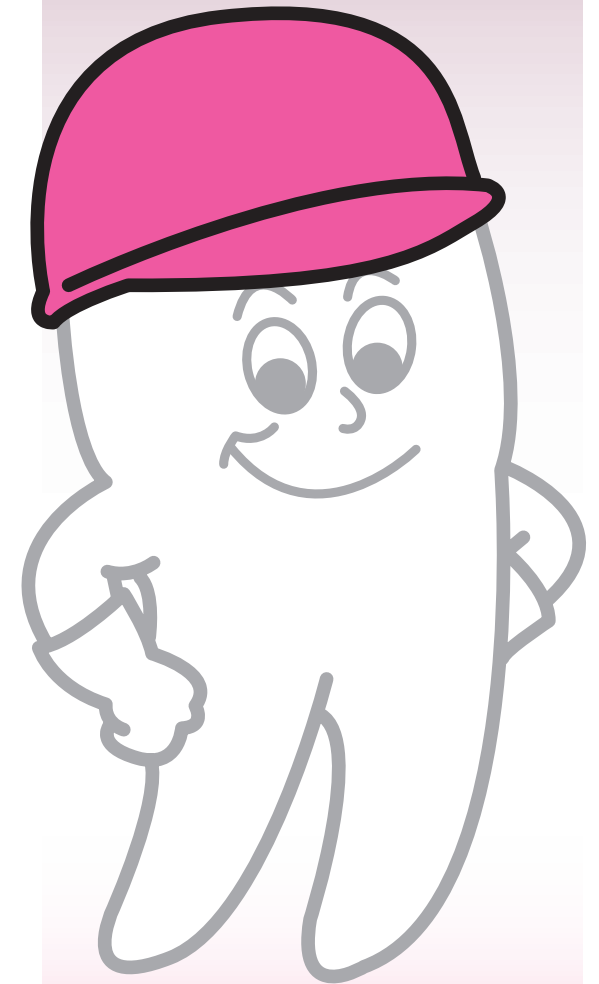
How Can I Learn More?

To learn more about sealants, talk to your dentist, contact your local health department, or write:

Dental Sealant Program
Bureau of Dental Health
N.Y.S. Health Department
Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237-0619

Dental Sealants

**Dental Sealants
Work HARD!**



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