

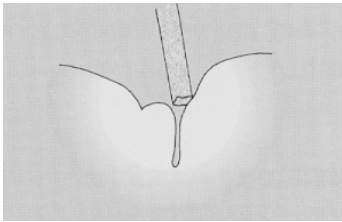
# Seal Out Tooth Decay

## What is a dental sealant?

A dental sealant is a clear or white plastic material that is applied to the chewing surfaces of back teeth.

## 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.



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

## When should sealants be placed?

Sealants are most useful if they are placed on permanent molars within six months of them coming into the mouth.

The first permanent molars erupt between the ages of 5 and 7, while the second permanent molars grow in between the ages of 11 and 14.

## How is a sealant placed?

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 applied as a liquid and a light is used to quickly harden the sealant material.

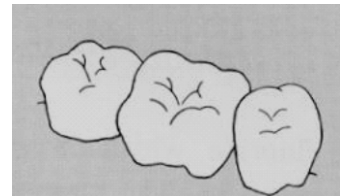
**Sealants +  
Fluoride =  
Best Protection  
Against Cavities**

## How long will a sealant last?

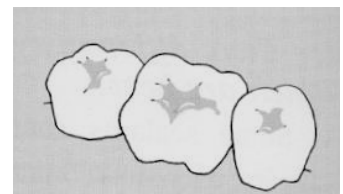
Sealants can last for up to 10 years however they need to be checked regularly to determine if they need to be repaired or replaced.

## What about the 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, fluoridated water, and professionally applied fluoride (e.g. fluoride varnish). Both sealants and fluoride are recommended for best protection against tooth decay.



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 pea-size portion of fluoride toothpaste for children over age 3. The toothpaste should be approved by the Canadian Dental Association.

- Children should spit out toothpaste. Swallowing toothpaste should be discouraged.
- Replace toothbrushes every three months. Or, if your child has just recovered from an illness, use a new toothbrush.

### Flossing Facts

- Flossing helps to prevent gum disease and cavities from starting between teeth.
- Flossing cleans between teeth and under the gums where the toothbrush cannot reach.
- A parent will need to floss their child's teeth until around age 9. Usually by this time the child should be able to floss on his/her own.

### Beat Sweets

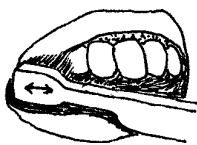
- Encourage healthy snacks.
- Reduce how often snacks are offered, especially sticky foods that cling to teeth.
- Eat sweets at the end of a meal. Increased saliva flow during meals helps reduce the effects of harmful acids.
- Choose milk or water more often than sugary drinks.

### Dental Visits

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

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

**Outside**



**Inside**

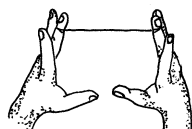


**Tops of Teeth**

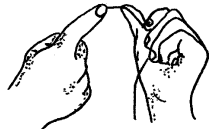


Angle brush towards your gums. Gently brush back and forth with short vibrating strokes on all sides of your

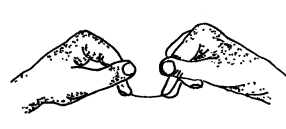
## Floss once a day. Children younger than 9 will need a parent's help.



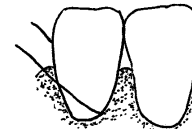
Wrap floss around middle fingers. Use about ½ metre or 18 inches.



How to hold floss for top teeth.



How to hold floss for bottom teeth.



Make a “C” shape against the tooth and move floss gently between the teeth and under the gums. Move up and down. Move to the next tooth.