

Seal the Deal: Protect Your Smile from Tooth Decay with Sealants!



Although preventable, tooth decay is a chronic disease affecting all age groups. In fact, it is one of the most common childhood diseases.¹ Tooth decay, left untreated, can cause pain, tooth loss, and difficulty eating. Untreated decay and tooth loss can also have negative effects on an individual's self-esteem.

Q

What are dental sealants?

A

Sealants are thin, plastic coatings painted on the chewing (occlusal) 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.²

Q

Which teeth are suitable for sealants?

A

Dental studies show that permanent first and second molars are the most likely to benefit from sealant application.² First molars usually come into the mouth when a child is about 6 years of age. Second molars appear at about age 12. The dentist will determine if sealants are recommended for the patient. If sealants are recommended, it is best if the sealant is applied soon after the molars have erupted, before the teeth are subject to decay.

Q**Why should my child get sealants?****A**

Sealants help prevent tooth decay by creating a barrier between a tooth and decay-causing bacteria. Properly applied and maintained, sealants usually stop cavities from growing and can prevent the need for expensive fillings. Recent CDC findings report, sealants have been shown to reduce decay by 80 percent in the first two years.² Children drinking fluoridated water and getting dental sealants can prevent cavities and save money by avoiding expensive dental care in the future.³

Q**Should adults get sealants too?****A**

In most cases, by the time an individual reaches adulthood, the occlusal surfaces of the teeth have been worn smooth, thereby reducing the chances for occlusal decay. Also, the majority of adults have had long-term exposure to fluoride through water, mouth rinses, and toothpaste, which also help protect the teeth from decay. Lastly, oral hygiene and diet tend to be better in adults than in children. For these reasons, MetLife does not recommend adult sealants as a covered plan benefit. However, it is important to remember that the dentist may, regardless of the patient's age, recommend sealants, based on the patient's oral health history and their risk for tooth decay.

1. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Dental Caries (review November 2022), <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/research/data-statistics/dental-carries> Accessed 06/30/2024
2. CDC, Oral Health, Dental Sealants. https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/dental_sealant_program/index.htm. Accessed 06/30/2024
3. CDC, Oral Health, Oral Health Fast Facts; <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/fast-facts/index.html>. Accessed 06/30/2024.

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