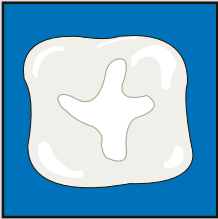


As a molar grows, pits and grooves form on the top of the tooth. These grooves can trap food and bacteria and cause decay.



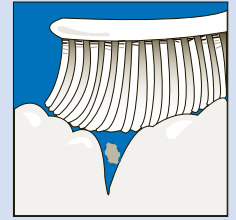
A dental sealant fills the grooves. This keeps food out and makes it easier to keep the tooth clean.

### Why do molars need dental sealants?

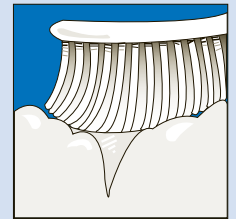
# Dental Sealants

## Questions & Answers

Toothbrush bristles cannot clean out food and bacteria trapped in open grooves.



Dental sealants fill pits and grooves. This keeps food out, and makes the tooth easier to clean.



### How do dental sealants prevent decay?

### Who should get sealants on their teeth?

Children should be checked by a dentist to find out if sealants might prevent decay. The best time to check would be just after the six-year molars appear. Teeth should be checked again just after the twelve-year molars appear. These molars are permanent teeth and will not grow back if they are lost to decay.

### Why is preventing decay with sealants better than repairing a diseased tooth?

Sealants can prevent decay and save the structure of the natural tooth. Sealants can prevent the pain caused by decayed teeth. Sealants can prevent the trouble, expense, and discomfort of dental repairs.

### How long do sealants last?

Sealants should last up to ten years with proper care. Proper care includes regular brushing and flossing and a healthy diet, low in sweets. Children should not chew ice or bite hard objects, such as hard candy. Sealants that get damaged or loose can easily be repaired by your dentist.

### Does it hurt to have sealants put on teeth?

No, getting a sealant is painless. It only takes about five minutes per tooth. No drilling or shots are necessary. Normal daily routines and meals can resume immediately after sealants are applied. There is no recovery time, or soreness.

### Do baby teeth need sealants?

Sometimes baby teeth have pits and grooves that are deep enough to trap food and cause decay. This could make them come out earlier than they should. Sealants can prevent problems. Your dentist can advise you if sealants are recommended for your child.

### How much do sealants cost?

Generally, sealing one tooth costs less than filling one tooth. Unfortunately, a filling is usually just the first step to saving a tooth damaged by decay. Decay prevention with sealants and regular care is cheaper in the long run.