

SEALANTS

What are sealants? Sealants are a safe, painless, and low-cost way to help protect your child's back teeth from decay. Sealants have been used on children's teeth for more than 20 years. A thin, plastic, tooth-colored or clear coating (**sealant**) is bonded to the chewing surfaces of the molars and premolars. This forms a hard shield that prevents food and bacteria from getting into the tiny grooves in the teeth and causing decay.

Why should children have sealants? The chewing surfaces on the back teeth in children have tiny grooves that form as each tooth develops. This is where most decay occurs in children. The bristles on a toothbrush cannot get down into these grooves to remove the food and bacteria that get trapped there.

Children are ready for sealants as soon as their first permanent premolars (6-year molars) **erupt** (come in). This occurs around the ages of 5 and 7. The second molars (12-year molars) and the premolars should be sealed as soon as they erupt, between the 11 and 14 years of age. That is because the greatest chance of decay occurs during the first year after the teeth erupt. However, it is never too late to apply sealants, as long as the teeth are free of decay and fillings. Baby molars often don't need to be sealed unless there is a high risk of decay. Losing baby molars from decay can cause crowding when the permanent teeth come in, since baby teeth are "space holders" for permanent teeth.

Sealants can be placed on all back teeth in one short office visit. The teeth are cleaned, dried, and etched (roughed up) so the sealant material will adhere. Using a small brush, or applicator, the sealant material is painted onto the chewing surfaces of the teeth. The material is then cured with a special light. Each tooth is then examined to be sure that the grooves are fully covered and that the sealants won't interfere with chewing. The material bonds with the tooth as it hardens so your child can eat normally right away.

Sealants can last for 3 to 5 years. If they chip or come off, they can easily be replaced. Any problems can be detected and corrected at your child's regular dental checkups. As long as the sealants are in place, decay is less likely to develop in the grooves. You can help the sealants to last by encouraging your child not to chew on ice cubes or hard and sticky candy.

Call our office if you have any questions on sealants or would like to schedule an appointment. You can also visit our website, www.rinehartdentist.com!

Sincerely,

Dr. Rinehart and Staff

P.S.

We are pleased to announce that we are now a Delta Dental Premier provider!



Before



After

