

Extra Protection for Your Child's Teeth

You may have thought that regular brushing, flossing, dental check-ups, and, if necessary, a tooth filling, were the only ways to prevent and stop a cavity in your child's mouth.

Your child's back teeth may have deep pits and grooves that make them more susceptible to getting cavities, he or she may benefit from a dental sealant. A dental sealant is a plastic material that covers the at risk tooth. Because a toothbrush can't always reach these uneven surfaces of the back teeth where food and plaque settle, a sealant will protect this area by keeping out food and plaque.

Is this a long or painful procedure?

No. In fact, it's a simple and pain-free procedure and will only take your dentist a few minutes to seal each tooth. First, your child's teeth are first cleaned. A mild acid solution is then applied to the tooth surface. This will help the sealant stick to the tooth. Finally, the sealant is applied and hardens to the tooth.

Your child's tooth is then protected as long as the sealant remains—usually at least five years. Regular check-ups will ensure that the sealant is intact and working.

What about adults? Can they benefit from a dental sealant?

Yes, but decay in the pits of the back teeth occurs early in life making sealants more necessary and for children and teenagers.

Should all children have dental sealants?

If your child does not have deep pits and grooves in her back teeth, proper care of her teeth should be sufficient to prevent decay. If your child does have deep pits and grooves that are unreachable by toothbrush bristles, sealants will help prevent cavities.

Although sealants provide some physical protection for your child's teeth, there is no substitute for a proper diet, an ongoing dental hygiene program, and regular visits to your dentist.