

TOOTH SEALANTS

WHY SEAL TEETH? Over the past 20 or more years, numerous materials and techniques have been developed to seal the top (occlusal) surfaces of teeth. These procedures are necessary because many teeth have defective occlusal surfaces when they completely erupt into the mouth, and food debris and microorganisms penetrate into the grooves on the teeth during eating. Patients cannot clean these areas effectively, and dental decay (caries) occurs frequently.

DO ALL TEETH NEED TO BE SEALED? Usually, only the back (posterior) teeth require sealing. We cannot tell which teeth require sealing, as the incomplete fusion of the teeth often leaves a nearly microscopic entry from the enamel outside the tooth into the softer dentin inside. Therefore, we suggest that all posterior teeth and selected anterior teeth be sealed. A few teeth that do not require sealing may be sealed inadvertently because it is impossible to select defective from non-defective teeth at an early age.

WILL ALL DECAY BE PREVENTED? Sealants prevent the majority of decay on the chewing surfaces of teeth. However, routine fluoride therapy is required to decrease decay initiation on other surfaces of the teeth. Decay may begin between the teeth, even if sealants have been placed, if flossing and brushing are not adequate.

COST? The cost for sealing a tooth with plastic is less than one-half the cost of filling (restoring) the tooth in the event of decay. Further, the sealant does not require anesthetic, cutting or weakening the tooth, while normal restorations require cutting and weakening the tooth.

HOW LONG DO SEALANTS LAST? Studies show sealants last many years. However, occasional resealing may be required- depending on diet and other factors.

Thank you.