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SEALANTS

Sealants are helping to create a generation of youngsters that are nearly cavity free. Statistics show that one out of every three children between the ages of 5 and 17 has never had a cavity. Dental professionals attribute water fluoridation and use of sealants with helping to bring about this rapid decline in cavities.

The use of sealants does not eliminate the need for regular attention to dental care. Dentists recommend regular brushing and flossing, attention to the amount of sugary foods consumed, and to the frequency with which they are eaten. The teeth are subjected to a 20 minute acid attack every time sugary foods are eaten, causing an erosive action that can break dawn healthy enamel.

The plastic-like coating, called pit and fissure sealant, is applied to the chewing surface of the back teeth and to indentations and nicks in the teeth's surfaces. It i used by dentists as a preventive measure to ward off decay that tends to settle into hidden crevices in the teeth.

The preventive plastics also are used to seal "fissures," or joint lines in a tooth's enamel created while the tooth is being formed. A perfect fissure should be tightly sealed, but often several spots along the length of the fissure will open directly into the tooth. Food and bacteria collect there. This eventually weakens the tooth and causes decay. Sealants help during the formative stages so they can withstand the effect of sugar and stress later on.

To apply the sealant, the dentist first cleans the tops and sides of selected teeth. The tooth enamel is then treated with an acid solution that etches the surface of the tooth, causing it to be temporarily porous and somewhat rough.

The liquid sealant clear or milky white in color, is applied and allowed to harden. Within a few days, the excess plastic wears off, leaving the sealant only in the pits and fissures. The plastic covering is only temporary, and must be checked periodically for flaws.

Dental sealants are safe, effective and economical! Dental sealants have been used for more than 40 years. Due to technology and science, they have continued to improve over the years. Clinical studies have shown sealants to be very effective in reducing tooth decay in children.