

## Caring for your child's teeth

Fissure sealants are one way of helping to prevent decay in teeth. You should also

- Brush teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks to mealtimes
- Visit the dentist regularly for check-ups

Your dentist or the practice Childsmile nurse will be happy to offer further advice and Information.



Image: photostock / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

(1) Ahovuo-Saloranta A, Hiiri A, Nordblad A, Mäkelä M, Worthington Helen V. Pit and fissure sealants for preventing dental decay in the permanent teeth of children and adolescents. Cochrane Database of Systemic reviews 2008 (4):001830.

(2) Azarpazhooh A, Main PA. Is there a risk of harm or toxicity in the placement of pit and fissure sealant materials? A systematic review. J Can Dent Assoc 2008 Mar;74(2):179-183.



## Fissure Sealants: your questions answered



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**Patient Information Guide**

# Fissure Sealants for Children

## What are fissure sealants?

A fissure sealant is a plastic coating that is placed on the biting surface of the back teeth. It is very effective in preventing dental decay. (1)

## How are they applied?

The tooth is cleaned well, prepared using a special gel, washed and dried. The sealant is then painted on and set using a blue light. It only takes a few minutes per tooth.

## Will my child need an anaesthetic injection?

No. Applying the sealants is completely painless.

## How do they work?

Decay starts when plaque gets stuck in the naturally occurring pits and grooves in teeth and is not brushed away. Fissure sealants form a smooth surface over these grooves and prevent plaque from sitting in them. The teeth are then easier to clean and less prone to decay.

## When should they be applied?

They can be applied at any time, however to be most effective this should be as soon as the second (or adult) teeth are far enough through and can be fully dried. This is usually about age 6-7 for the first molars and 12-13 for the second molars.

## How long do they last?

Fissure sealants can last many years but they do need to be checked regularly and reapplied if they come off.

## Which teeth should be sealed?

The biting surfaces of the back (molar) teeth are most prone to decay and should be sealed. Fissure sealants can also be applied to any other teeth with pits or grooves, such as the premolars or the back surfaces of the front (incisor) teeth.

## What do they look like?

They are a white coating on the top of the tooth.



Before fissure sealant



After Fissure Sealant

## Who should have them?

Fissure sealants are recommended if:

- Your child has deep pits or fissures in their teeth
- They have had decay in their baby (first) or adult (second) teeth
- They have special needs which make tooth brushing difficult
- They have a medical condition which could be affected by dental disease or treatment.

If your child has a low risk of decay it is not necessary to seal their teeth, but they could still benefit.

## Are they safe?

There are lots of studies to show that fissure sealants are very safe during and after they are applied to the teeth.(2)

## Will my child still need check -ups?

Yes. It is very important that all the teeth are checked regularly by a dentist who will also be able to make sure the sealants are still working.

## Do they still need to brush their teeth?

Definitely! Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste is still needed to keep teeth strong.

## When can they eat?

Usually you can eat straight away, but your dentist or hygienist will let you know if you can not.

## What about fluoride varnish?

Fluoride varnish can be applied to the teeth instead of or as well as fissure sealants. It is still important to have this applied as it will help to protect the surfaces that can't be sealed. Fissure sealing the teeth is more effective at preventing decay than fluoride varnish alone.

