

Children's Health



Dental Sealants Can Cut Kids' Cavity Risk 80 Percent

(NAPS)—Parents can help their children practically eliminate their chance of getting cavities, often at no cost—yet they don't. Here's a closer look at this conundrum:

Be Smart About Sealants

Beyond daily brushing and flossing, dental sealants have been shown to significantly reduce the risk of cavities in kids—yet the clear protective coatings, which work by filling the deep grooves where bacteria can accumulate—remain largely underused.

The thin, slippery coating applied to the chewing surfaces of back teeth (molars) makes it difficult for plaque to adhere, which prevents decay from sticking to the pits and grooves of molars. By blocking germs and food, sealants provide protection against tooth decay by nearly 80 percent in molars for two years and they continue to protect against 50 percent of cavities for up to four years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Children without dental sealants are three times more likely to develop cavities," says Nadia Fugate, DMD, who serves as a Delta Dental of Washington dental consultant. "Sealants are one of the most effective ways to reduce cavities among children 5 to 15 years old."

Dr. Fugate adds that dental sealants are safe, require no drilling, and are less expensive and easier to apply than fillings. Sealants last five to 10 years and are applied in a simple three-step process performed by the dentist or a dental hygienist:



Smile: Sealants may mean kids can avoid getting cavities and their parents can avoid paying for them.

- Teeth are cleaned with a special toothpaste
- A cleansing liquid is applied gently with a small piece of cotton and rinsed off
- The sealant is "painted" onto the tooth, requiring about a minute to form a protective shield

Sealants and Insurance

Dental sealants are completely covered by most employer-sponsored dental plans, with little or no out-of-pocket expense to parents; for those with individual and family plans, insurers such as Delta Dental offer a free online estimator which calculates any out-of-pocket cost based on the child's specific benefits and the dentist. In addition, many schools offer a school sealant program—ask your school nurse if your child's school participates.

Learn More

For further information about dental sealants, visit Delta Dental of Washington's blog at www.DeltaDentalWA.com/blog.