

# FISSURE SEALANTS

This technique has been shown to prevent tooth decay. All biting surfaces of your teeth have some degree of natural valleys or fissures. Toothbrush bristles cannot fit into deep and narrow fissures, which allows food and decay-causing bacteria to accumulate and decay to occur. Your dentist can apply a coat of plastic material (fissure sealant) to deep fissures which creates a smooth protective barrier to prevent decay.

## WHEN TO PLACE A SEALANT

Fissure sealants are best applied soon after the tooth appears in the mouth. Usually we wait until the tooth is fully erupted from the gum but if susceptible, we may recommend sealing a partially erupted tooth. Permanent teeth appear between the ages of 6 to 14. Generally teeth are best sealed in children, teenagers, and young adults. This way the sealant can protect the teeth against cavities as soon as possible. Sometimes we recommend sealants to preserve at-risk healthy teeth in adults.



*Stained fissures*

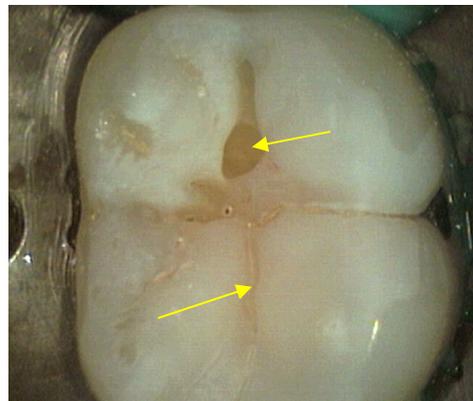
## WHICH TEETH DO WE SEAL

For most people we only need to seal their vulnerable back/grinding teeth with deep fissures. Some people have deep grooves or fissures in other teeth; your dentist will let you know if this applies to you.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Treatment is on the surface of the teeth and usually does not need numbing. Firstly we use cotton wool rolls or a rubber dam sheet to isolate the tooth and keep it properly dry. Next, the dentist will clean any food debris or early decay from the fissures. This is achieved using fine sand particles, or some shallow surface drilling of the fissures. Should there be decay present when the fissures are cleaned out the dentist will fill or seal as appropriate.

The tooth is next prepared with a chemical solution that allows the sealant to stick to the tooth. It is washed and dried, then the sealant system is placed.



*Ready to seal with fissures cleaned and decay removed*

The sealant is a runny paste that flows into all the fissures before being set hard with a blue light for 20 seconds. Your bite is checked and the sealant adjusted and polished if needed.



*Combination sealant and filling completed*

## HOW LONG DO SEALANTS LAST

Sealants will last many years. Occasional top-up or resealing may be required. The cost of a preventive sealant is far less than of a possible filling and does not involve preparation and weakening of a tooth which occurs with filling placement. Sealants protect against decay on the treated surface but do not prevent decay in other areas – it is still important to regularly brush and floss your teeth!

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