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Sealants

Why Seal Teeth? Over the past many years, numerous materials and techniques have been developed to seal the chewing (occlusal) surfaces of teeth. Sealants are necessary because some teeth have defective occlusal surfaces when they 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. It is difficult to tell which teeth require sealing because incomplete fusion of the teeth often leaves a microscopic entry from the enamel outside the tooth into the softer dentin inside. Therefore, we suggest that all suspect posterior teeth and selected anterior teeth be sealed. An electronic device (DiagnoDent) may be used to assist the dentist in determining if dental decay is present.

Will All Decay Be Prevented? Sealants placed as close to the eruption time of the teeth as possible prevent the majority of decay on the chewing (occlusal) surfaces of the teeth. However, flossing, brushing, and routine fluoride therapy are required to prevent decay on the other surfaces of the teeth. In the presence of poor oral hygiene, decay may begin between the teeth since sealants cannot be placed on these surfaces.

Cost? The cost for sealing a tooth with plastic is about one-fourth to one-third the cost of filling (restoring) the tooth in the event of decay. Sealants do not require anesthetic or cutting away tooth structure.

How Long Do Sealants Last? Studies show sealants last many years. However, occasional resealing may be required.