

School Based Dental Sealant Programs



- Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of children aged 5 to 17 years - four times more common than asthma (42% versus 9.5%).
- Children living in poverty suffer twice as much tooth decay as their more affluent peers, and their disease is more likely to be untreated.
- It has been estimated that 51 million school hours are lost per year in U.S. because of dental-related illness.
- Poor oral health has been related to decreased school performance, poor social relationships, and less success later in life. Children experiencing pain are distracted and unable to concentrate on schoolwork.
- *Dental decay is entirely preventable!*
- U. S. Task Force on Community Preventive Services found strong scientific evidence that school based sealant delivery programs are effective in reducing cavities and strongly recommended school sealant programs to prevent caries.
- According to Centers for Disease Control, school-based dental sealant programs could increase the prevalence of dental sealants and reduce or eliminate oral health disparities among school aged children.
- In Washington State, schools can start a dental sealant program in collaboration with the local health jurisdictions and other local partners.
- For more information about dental sealants and school based dental sealant programs please contact:

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What are dental sealants?

Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings which are applied to the chewing surfaces of the molars (back teeth). Most tooth decay in children and teens occurs in these surfaces. Sealants cover the chewing surfaces to prevent decay.

Which teeth are suitable for sealants?

Permanent molars are the most likely to benefit from sealant application. First molars usually come into the mouth when a child is about 6 years of age. Second molars appear at about age 12. It is best if the sealant is applied soon after the molars have erupted, before the teeth have a chance to decay. For that reason, children between the ages of 5 and 15 benefit most from sealants.

What are the benefits of sealants?

Sealants are slippery and make it harder for plaque that causes decay to stick in the pits and grooves of molars. Because sealants can prevent more than 80% of dental decay in children, they reduce the need for fillings and other more expensive treatment. Sealants are an economical preventive measure to keep teeth healthy for years.

Are sealants safe and effective?

Yes. Dental sealants have been used for more than 40 years. Due to technology and science, they have continued to improve over the years. When properly placed, dental sealants are almost 100% effective in preventing decay on the chewing surfaces of first and second permanent molar teeth. Dental sealants are safe, effective and economical.