Dental Sealants for Sunny Smiles

One out of five children and one in seven adolescents have at least one cavity on a permanent tooth. Approximately 90% of tooth decay in permanent teeth occurs in the chewing surfaces of back teeth (molars).

Dental sealants can help prevent permanent teeth from getting cavities.

**What is a sealant?**
A sealant is a thin plastic coating that keeps food and germs off of the chewing surfaces of teeth. Sealants can protect against 85% of chewing surface cavities.

**What color are sealants?**
Sealants may be clear, white or tinted. Most people will not be able to see the sealant when a child smiles or talks.

**Which teeth are sealed?**
Molars and premolars that help us chew our food. These teeth must last a lifetime!

**Do sealants last a lifetime?**
Sealants will generally last about five years—some longer. If part of a sealant is lost, it must be replaced for the tooth to remain sealed.

Teeth that have sealants need to be checked during routine dental visits to make sure that the sealant is in place.
About 23.4% of Florida third graders have untreated tooth decay.

Every $1 spent on dental sealants, saves $1.88 in fillings.

There were 12,906 caries-related emergency department visits costing more than $14 million in 2014.

Dental Sealants: The Solution

Dental sealants effectively reduce tooth decay in children. Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings applied to the grooves on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. This protection against tooth decay reduces caries incidence over time: 86.0% (year one), 78.6% (year two), and 71.2% (year three).

Prevention vs. Treatment: The Cost

The Florida Department of Health’s Public Health Dental Program supports statewide preventive dental services through County Health Department dental programs. Dental sealants performed by these locations during 2014 were analyzed for cost effectiveness, by comparing the cost of receiving one dental sealant ($44.12) to the cost of one dental filling ($197.09) on an unsealed tooth. The cost savings over three years for 36,955 children receiving one dental sealant is $2,388,355.

Learn more: FloridaHealth.gov/Dental

5. State of Florida, Agency for Health Care Administration. Emergency Department Patient Data, Calendar Year 2014. Analysis by Scott L. Tomas, DMD, DrPH.