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INDEPENDENT, OBJECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED

Fact Sheet: Teeth sealants for children and young people

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The molars or back teeth are most at risk of tooth decay. Bacteria can be trapped in the dents and grooves (called fissures). Dentists can apply a fissure sealant to children or young people's molars.

What happens when sealants are applied?

Getting fissure sealants applied is painless. There is no drilling in healthy teeth and it does not take long. The dentist first cleans the chewing surface of the teeth, roughens the surface up a bit with a gel and then dries the teeth. A resin (plastic) liquid is then applied to the fissures. Within minutes it dries into a clear or tooth-coloured layer. It does not contain metal.

At what age might sealants be considered?

Sealants are primarily a preventive treatment for the permanent teeth, not the milk or baby teeth. The first permanent teeth emerge between five and seven years of age. Another set comes about six years later.

Teeth sealants last longer than four years for more than half of the children and young people who have them done. During this time the risk of cavities in the sealed teeth is about halved. The resins applied as sealants these days are generally believed to be reasonably safe, although some people have had allergic reactions to them.

Who covers the costs?

In , health insurance covers the costs of sealants for the permanent molars of children and young people. If the dentist suggests sealants for other teeth, they need to explain whether or not the costs will be covered. In other countries, check with your dentist or insurance program about costs. Sealants for teeth other than permanent molars do not have the same level of proof of benefit as sealants for molars.

Glossary**Bacteria**

Bacteria are micro-organisms that, unlike viruses, can exist on their own. Viruses, on the other hand, can only exist inside a living cell. Most bacteria are not harmful to people, and some are actually beneficial. Bowel bacteria support bowel health. However if they get into the urinary system, they can cause an infection there. Doctors prescribe antibiotics for illnesses where bacteria need to be stopped or killed off. Immunisation is also possible against some bacterial infections, such as diphtheria, tetanus or whooping cough.

Sources

Ahovuo-Saloranta A, Hiiri A, Nordblad A, Worthington H, Mäkelä M. Pit and fissure sealants for preventing dental decay in the permanent teeth of children and adolescents. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, Issue 4 of 2004. (Informed Health Online summary) (URL: <http://www.gesundheitsinformation.de/index.268.95.en.html>) (Cochrane Database) (URL: <http://www.mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsysrev/articles/CD001830/frame.html>)

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG)

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Evidence basis of our health information

Our information is based primarily on systematic reviews of the effects of health care. Systematic reviews are necessary to gain an objective picture of health care. In order to do this, a clear question is formulated. Researchers then find all the relevant studies that could answer this question. They then evaluate those studies.

You can find a list of the evidence and other scientific literature on which this information is based at **www.informedhealthonline.org**

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