

JUSTIN PHILIPP ASK THE EXPERT

Sealants can help prevent decay



Question: What are sealants and who needs them?

Answer: Sealants are one of the most effective tools for healthy teeth because they keep food from getting trapped in the grooves or pits where 70 percent of cavities start.

Even if you're a great brusher, it's difficult for the bristles to get down into the bumpy services of your back teeth where food often clings and leads to plaque build-up.

Dental sealant is a thin coating placed in the grooves of your teeth that protects the enamel and "seals out" food and plaque.

Traditionally, sealants are placed in children around the age of six with a second round at age 12, but some adults, including myself, can also benefit. Anyone who wants to stop tooth decay should discuss sealants with their dentist.

The process is pretty quick and painless. No numbing or drilling is needed.

First, teeth are cleaned, conditioned and dried. Then the sealant is painted on and a special light is used to harden it. Each tooth takes just about thirty seconds.

While each person is different, sealants will typically last three to six years before they need to be replaced. Your dentist will monitor sealants and watch for signs of wear or chipping during your regular cleanings.

Because sealants prevent tooth decay and are only 20 percent the cost of fillings many insurance companies will cover them.

Whether you have or may get sealants in the future, you should always brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride paste. Also, floss between your teeth daily and visit your dentist for professional cleanings and exams twice a year.

Dr. Justin Philipp, DMD, a family and cosmetic dentist, can be reached at jphilipp.com or 480-306-5506.

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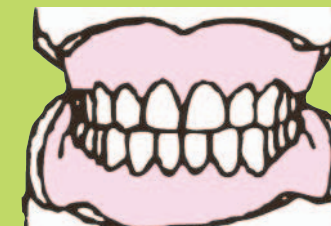
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