

## Fissure Sealants

### **What are they?**

Fissure sealants are a protective plastic coating that your dentist/hygienist can apply to the chewing surfaces of adult teeth at the back of the mouth once they have erupted helping prevent decay.



### **Why are they a good idea?**

Studies show fissure sealants are an excellent way to help protect your children's back teeth from decay. All parents want their children to suffer from less decay. Worryingly, and what most parents may be surprised to learn, is that tooth-brushing and fluoride are not effective in preventing decay on the chewing surfaces of back teeth! Why? Well, the biting surfaces of back teeth are not smooth and flat. They are criss-crossed with tiny hills and valleys called 'Fissures'. These are places where plaque bacteria can hide, so narrow that even toothbrush bristles cannot clean them. This makes the biting surfaces of back teeth more vulnerable to decay – in fact, studies show that a staggering 9 out of 10 cavities in children occur on the chewing surfaces of these teeth. Fissure sealants provide the ideal preventive treatment for these teeth - they seal off the grooves on the chewing surfaces and form a barrier, helping to protect these susceptible tooth surfaces from decay. They are safe and pain free.

### **Which teeth should be sealed?**

The most common teeth to be sealed are the adult molar teeth at the back of the mouth. These erupt in 2 stages – the first molars erupt at about age 6 to 8, and the second molars at about age 11 to 14. In some cases your dentist may also sometimes recommend sealing other teeth as well if appropriate.

### **How are sealants applied?**

To place the sealant, the tooth is cleaned and conditioned with a special solution called 'etch' to enable the sealant to stick. The sealant is then applied and is hardened using a special blue 'curing light'. All in all it takes only about 5 minutes per tooth. The dentist/hygienist must be able to keep the tooth free from saliva throughout.

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