

Seal Out Tooth Decay



Even if you brush, floss, rinse with fluoride, and never eat a sticky sweet, decay-causing bacteria can invade the tiny pits and crevices in your molars, or chewing teeth. To head off that kind of decay, researchers have developed sealants—special plastic coatings that form an effective barrier between bacteria and the chewing surfaces of your teeth, where fluoride is less effective.

Approximately 90 percent of the cavities in school-age children occur in crevices in the back teeth, so sealants are best applied when the permanent molars first emerge. (The American Dental Association reports a significant decrease in cavities in children who have sealants applied to their teeth.) But that doesn't mean sealants aren't useful or appropriate for adults who have cavity-prone teeth. So ask your dentist or dental hygienist about sealants the next time you have a dental checkup.

The procedure is simple, pain-free, and won't interfere with later dental work. Sealed teeth may need to be touched up periodically, though.