Preventive dental measures done at the right time can improve oral health throughout a child's lifetime.

Do baby teeth need sealants?

Sometimes baby teeth have pits and grooves that are deep enough to trap food and cause decay, which could make those teeth come out too soon. Parents should ask their dentist if dental sealants are recommended for their children.

Will dental sealants replace fluoride?

No. Fluoride can be found in toothpaste, mouth rinses and fluoridated water. Fluoride helps prevent decay on the smooth sides of teeth. Unfortunately, food gets trapped on the rough, pitted chewing surfaces of back teeth and prevents fluoride from being as effective on those surfaces. Dental sealants are only effective on uneven chewing surfaces. Both fluoride and dental sealants are needed to help keep all areas of teeth healthy.

For more information contact:
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
Oral Health Program, 800-891-7415
health.mo.gov/oralhealth

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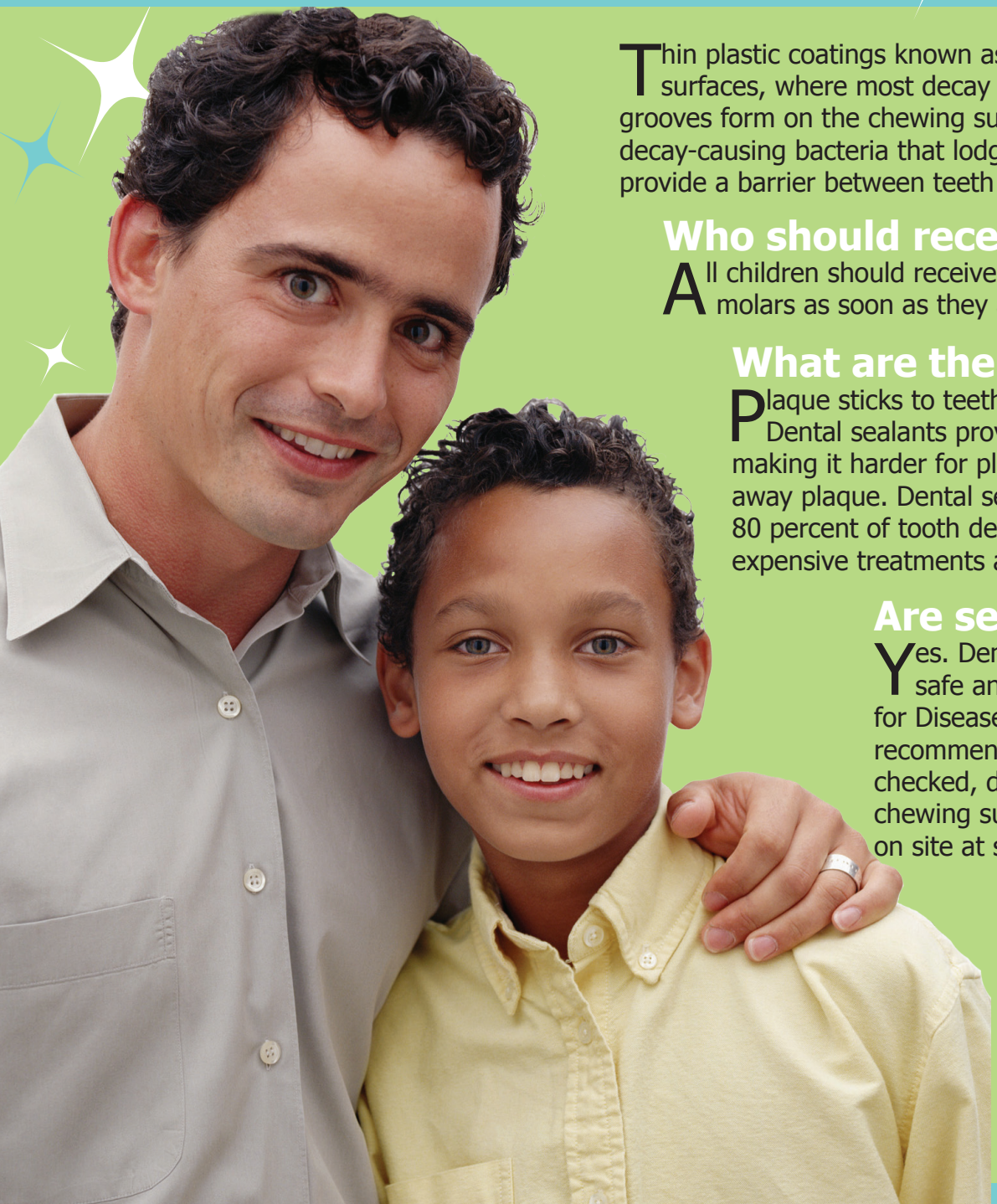
Dental Sealants

Seal Out Decay

Oral Health Program
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

WHAT ARE DENTAL SEALANTS?



Thin plastic coatings known as dental sealants are applied to molar or back teeth chewing surfaces, where most decay occurs in children. As teeth come in and grow, pits and grooves form on the chewing surfaces. Brushing alone does not remove all the food and decay-causing bacteria that lodges there. Dental sealants cover the chewing surfaces to provide a barrier between teeth and food, and between teeth and decay-causing bacteria.

Who should receive dental sealants?

All children should receive dental sealants to help prevent decay. It is important to seal molars as soon as they arrive in the mouth.

What are the benefits of dental sealants?

Plaque sticks to teeth and breaks down their surface, causing tooth decay. Dental sealants provide a protective slippery coating to molar chewing surfaces, making it harder for plaque to stick in the pits and grooves and easier to brush away plaque. Dental sealants are an economical way to help prevent more than 80 percent of tooth decay. Sealants reduce the need for fillings and other more expensive treatments and help keep teeth healthier and longer than brushing alone.

Are sealants safe and effective?

Yes. Dental sealants have been used for more than 40 years and are safe and effective. The American Dental Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend dental sealants. When properly placed and routinely checked, dental sealants can be effective in preventing decay on molar chewing surfaces. Dental sealants can be applied in a dental office or on site at schools through a school-based dental sealant program.

Is brushing still important when teeth have dental sealants on them?

Yes! Dental sealants do not replace regular brushing, flossing, eating healthy foods and regular visits to the dentist. It is important to visit a dentist on a regular basis to make sure dental sealants still cover teeth properly and that teeth and gums are clean and healthy.