



## Dental Sealants

Dental sealants help protect the grooves of our back teeth from decay by a bonded coating that fills in the deepest crevices where bacteria can hide. One of the most common sites for decay is the grooves, pits and fissures in the chewing surfaces of teeth. Often, these grooves are skinnier than a toothbrush bristle and so even great brushing does not keep bacteria from the grooves. Sealants bond to tooth structure and fill in the areas most susceptible to decay. Sealants are typically 90% effective, so we cannot guarantee that no decay will form, but we promise to do everything we can to assure their highest success, including the use of a laser light detector to thoroughly check that no decay is sealed under our bonded material. The procedure is comfortable for children, and no anesthetic is required.

Our procedure begins with meticulously cleaning the groove of the tooth. We then use a Diagnodent laser light that reads the density of the enamel to assure that no decay is hiding in the groove. And we should note that sometimes we do find decay, in which case we will need to change our plan and do a conservative standard filling in the tooth. If this occurs, we may need to schedule another appointment to complete the proper restoration. If no decay is found, we proceed by micro-etching the enamel, rinsing, drying and placing the sealant material. We cure or harden the bonded resin sealant with a light, and the procedure is done.

Children tolerate the procedure very well! We find that children patients help us so much, which is important, because we need to keep the tooth dry while we are sealing it. Just keeping the mouth open for awhile is the main job of our patients. We give them a rest between each tooth, as it usually takes about 5 – 10 minutes per tooth for this procedure.