Dental Sealants and How Long They Last | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-sealants-how-long-last/

Details:

Dental sealants are thin protective coatings, usually a tooth-coloured resin, that a dentist places in the deep grooves on the chewing surfaces of back teeth to help prevent decay. With good care they can last five years or more, and sometimes well into adult life, although this varies. How long a sealant lasts depends on the biting forces it takes, the material, and how carefully it was placed. At Core Dental we check sealants at your regular visits.

How do dental sealants work?

The chewing surfaces of back teeth have pits and fissures, which are narrow grooves that can be hard to clean with a toothbrush. Food and bacteria can settle in these areas and contribute to decay. A sealant is a composite resin placed into the pits and fissures to make the surface smoother. That helps keep the area clean and reduces the chance of food becoming stuck. The goal is to help prevent decay before it starts.

Placing a sealant is usually quick and does not normally need drilling or an injection. Your dentist cleans and dries the tooth, prepares the surface, applies the resin and sets it with a special light. You can read more about the procedure in our article on why fissure sealants are used .

How long can dental sealants last?

Sealants can potentially last five years or more, and in some people they remain in place well into adulthood. That is a general guide only, because each mouth is different. Some sealants wear down, chip or come away earlier, and your dentist may suggest repairing or replacing them. Regular check-ups let us look at the sealant and the tooth underneath it, and top it up if that is needed.

What determines how long sealants last?

Three main things influence how long a sealant lasts:

Chewing load: the amount of pressure the sealant takes during chewing affects how fast it wears. Heavy biting forces, clenching or grinding can wear a sealant sooner.

The material: sealants are made from resin materials, and the type used can affect durability. Your dentist can tell you what material they use.

How well it was placed: a clean, dry tooth and careful technique help the sealant bond properly. Moisture or contamination during placement can shorten the life of a sealant.

Good home care also matters. Sealants help protect the grooves, but the smooth surfaces and the areas between teeth still need regular brushing and cleaning. See our tips on brushing teeth well and why cleaning between the teeth matters .

Who should have dental sealants?

As a general rule, children are more prone to tooth decay than adults. This may be because children often brush and clean between their teeth less consistently or with a less effective technique. Some children also have deeper pits and fissures, and wearing braces can make cleaning challenging. If there is a history of tooth decay, sealants may be recommended. For these reasons, sealants are more common in children, although adults can have them too when the teeth and decay risk suggest it.

Adult first molars tend to appear from around 6 years of age, and the other adult teeth, apart from wisdom teeth, usually appear by about 13 years of age. Sealants are generally placed on the adult teeth once they have come through. Your dentist will check each tooth and decide when sealing is suitable.

Are dental sealants safe?

Many parents ask us about the safety of dental sealants. The Australian Dental Association has published a position statement on this topic, and you are welcome to ask your dentist about the materials used and the current evidence. Sealant materials are widely used in dentistry. If you have questions or concerns, particularly about allergies, please tell us before treatment so we can talk them through.

What can you do to help sealants last?

Attend regular check-ups so sealants can be checked and repaired if needed.

Brush with fluoride toothpaste twice a day and clean between your teeth.

Avoid chewing ice, hard lollies and pen lids.

Tell your dentist if you grind or clench your teeth, because a custom-fitted splint may protect both your teeth and your sealants.

Ask about children's check-ups and bulk billing under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, where your child is eligible.

How does the Child Dental Benefits Schedule treat fissure sealing?

Sealants are one of the clearer cases of a preventive treatment that is explicitly funded, which is worth knowing before weighing up the cost of having them placed.

Services Australia names fissure sealing directly in the list of services the Child Dental Benefits Schedule covers, alongside check-ups, X-rays, cleaning, fillings, root canals and extractions. So for an eligible child, sealants fall inside the scheme rather than needing to be argued for.

The benefit is a capped amount over two years rather than per visit or per year. Services Australia covers "up to $1,158 for each eligible child over 2 calendar years for basic dental services", a cap "indexed yearly on 1 January". That is the published figure as at November 2026; since it changes each January, confirm the current amount with Services Australia. The two-year period "starts at the beginning of the calendar year in which your child both: becomes eligible; gets their first dental service", and any unused balance lapses at the end of it — "you'll have to wait for a new 2 year cover period to start."

Eligibility turns on three things: the child is eligible for Medicare, is aged 0 to 17 for at least one day in that calendar year, and the child or a parent, carer or guardian receives an eligible payment at least once that calendar year. There is nothing to apply for; Services Australia writes to families whose child is eligible.

The qualification that matters most for sealants specifically is about frequency. Services Australia warns that "there are some restrictions for basic dental services", and advises asking "if there are any

item or time restrictions before starting your service." Because sealants are checked and sometimes repaired or replaced over the years, whether a repeat is claimable at the time you want it is a question to put to the practice before the appointment rather than after.

Source: Services Australia, What's covered by the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, servicesaustralia.gov.au (page last updated 1 January 2026; accessed 3 November 2026).

How do sealants fit alongside the rest of prevention?

A sealant protects a particular surface of a particular tooth. It is not a substitute for anything else, and the national framing of decay prevention makes that clear.

The National Health and Medical Research Council describes tooth decay as "one of the most common health problems in Australia", noting that it "can cause pain, difficulty eating and sleeping, and may make people feel unhappy about their appearance."

Its account of what prevents decay is explicitly a combination rather than any single measure: "along with a combination of healthy diet, good oral hygiene, appropriate use of fluoridated toothpaste and regular dental check-ups, water fluoridation is an effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay."

Read against that list, a sealant is a targeted addition to a broader approach. It physically covers the pits and grooves of a back tooth, which are the surfaces a toothbrush cleans least reliably. It does nothing for the surfaces between teeth, nothing for the gums, and nothing about diet.

The NHMRC also records how much the broader picture has improved: it states that "in Australia, dental health has improved since water fluoridation began in the 1950s", and that "compared to their parents' generation, Australians born after 1970 (when the majority of water fluoridation programs commenced in Australia) have about half the level of tooth decay" — a comparison it draws from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data. Fluoridated water and sealants work on the problem from different directions, which is why a child in a fluoridated area may still be advised to have sealants placed on newly erupted molars.

Source: National Health and Medical Research Council, Health effects of water fluoridation, nhmrc.gov.au (accessed 3 November 2026).

Frequently asked questions

Do dental sealants hurt?

Placing a sealant is generally comfortable. It usually does not need drilling or a needle, because the dentist cleans the tooth, applies the resin and sets it with a light. Tell your dentist if you are nervous, and we can go through each step with you or your child.

Can a dental sealant fall out?

Yes, sometimes. Sealants can chip, wear or lift away, particularly under heavy biting. Your dentist checks them at regular visits. If part of a sealant is missing, it can often be repaired or replaced, which helps protect the tooth.

Can adults have fissure sealants?

Yes, in the right situation. Sealants are more common in children, but an adult with deep grooves, a history of decay or difficulty cleaning certain teeth may be offered them. Your dentist decides after

examining your teeth and discussing your decay risk.

Are sealants covered by the Child Dental Benefits Schedule?

Fissure sealants are one of the basic services the schedule can cover for eligible children, and we bulk bill eligible children aged 0 to 17. Eligibility is decided by Medicare, so please confirm it before your visit. Read our CDBS guide for details.

How often should sealants be checked?

We look at sealants as part of your routine check-up, which is commonly recommended about every six months, though your dentist may suggest a different interval. Regular checks help us find wear or small gaps early.

Is fissure sealing named in the Child Dental Benefits Schedule?

Yes. Services Australia lists fissure sealing among the services the schedule covers, alongside check-ups, X-rays, cleaning, fillings, root canals and extractions.

Can a sealant be replaced under the schedule if it fails?

That depends on the restrictions applying at the time. Services Australia states that there are some restrictions for basic dental services, and advises checking with your dentist whether any item or time restrictions apply before starting a service. Since sealants are reviewed and sometimes repaired over the years, it is worth asking before the appointment rather than after.

How much is available, and over what period?

Services Australia covers up to $1,158 for each eligible child over 2 calendar years, a cap indexed each 1 January; that is the published amount as at November 2026, so confirm the current figure with Services Australia. The two-year period starts at the beginning of the calendar year in which the child both becomes eligible and receives their first dental service, and an unused balance lapses at the end of it.

If our water is fluoridated, does my child still need sealants?

They can still be advised, because the two work differently. The NHMRC treats prevention as a combination of a healthy diet, good oral hygiene, appropriate use of fluoridated toothpaste, regular check-ups and water fluoridation. A sealant adds something none of those do directly: it physically covers the pits and grooves of a back tooth, the surfaces a toothbrush cleans least reliably. Whether your child needs them is a clinical judgement for their dentist.

Do sealants replace brushing and check-ups?

No. A sealant protects specific surfaces of specific teeth. It does nothing for the surfaces between teeth, nothing for the gums and nothing about diet, which is why it sits alongside the rest of a preventive routine rather than in place of it.

Related services and further reading

Why fissure sealants are used

Children's dentistry

Dental check-ups

Top tips for children's dental hygiene

How long do porcelain veneers last?

How long does teeth whitening last?

What is fluoride and what is it used for?

Fillings and restorations

How can we help?

If you would like to talk about sealants for yourself or your child, our team can help at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. Call 13 13 16 or book online. We can check your teeth, explain whether sealants suit you and quote before treatment starts. See our children's dentistry and general dentistry services for more information.

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Interest-free payment plans, HICAPS on-site claiming and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online via coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What is a dental sealant?

A dental sealant is a thin protective resin coating placed in the pits and fissures on the chewing surface of back teeth. It smooths the surface to help keep it clean and help prevent decay. Core Dental dentists decide when sealing is suitable.

How many years can a sealant stay in place?

Sealants can potentially last five years or more, and sometimes well into adult life, though this varies. Core Dental checks them at regular visits and can repair or replace a sealant that has worn or lifted.

What shortens the life of a dental sealant?

Heavy chewing forces, grinding or clenching, the material used and any moisture during placement can shorten a sealant's life. Core Dental dentists use a careful technique and review sealants at check-ups.

At what age do children usually have sealants placed at Core Dental?

Sealants are generally placed on adult teeth once they have come through. First adult molars tend to appear from about age 6, and other adult teeth, apart from wisdom teeth, by about 13. Core Dental dentists assess each child.

Does bulk billing apply to sealants at Core Dental?

Fissure sealants can be covered by the Child Dental Benefits Schedule for eligible children, and Core Dental bulk bills eligible children aged 0 to 17. Medicare decides eligibility, so please check it before your visit.

How do I book a sealant check at Core Dental?

Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online at coredental.com.au. We are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings across our nine Melbourne clinics, with Sunday closed.