



Help Your Child Keep a Healthy Smile with Dental Sealants



Too many children have nothing to smile about.

They have tooth pain that won't go away, can't eat or chew comfortably, are embarrassed by their teeth, and can't concentrate on schoolwork. Poor oral health from tooth decay can lead to lower school performance, poor social relationships, and less success later in life.

SEAL RI! is a school-based dental program that provides exams and dental sealants to help prevent tooth decay for children ages 5-10. This program is available at no cost to you.

Look for the consent form from your school for information on how to get this service for your child.

What are sealants and why are they necessary?

- Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings that are applied to the grooves on the chewing surfaces of molars (back teeth) to prevent tooth decay.
- Sealants protect the chewing surfaces from tooth decay by keeping germs and food particles out of these grooves.
- It is important to place sealants on the permanent first and second molars. These teeth are at the highest risk for tooth decay in children and teens.

Why is sealing a tooth better than waiting for decay and filling the cavity?

- Decay damages teeth permanently. Sealants protect them. Sealants can save time, money, and the discomfort sometimes associated with dental fillings. Fillings are not permanent. Each time a tooth is filled, more drilling is done and the tooth becomes a little weaker.



SEAL RI!

Is there any cost for sealants?

- There is no cost to you.

Is this done in the school?

- This depends on the school. Some schools offer dental services within the school during school hours using portable equipment. Other schools have a mobile van parked at the schools.
- SEAL RI! can also help you find a dental practice for your child in your community.

Does a dental professional perform the procedure?

- Dental professionals licensed in RI perform the procedures. A dentist will do an exam. Then a dental hygienist will place the sealants.

Does it hurt?

- No. Getting sealants is painless.



How long does it take?

- Sealants do not involve drilling or removing parts of the tooth. The process is quick and easy. After the tooth is cleaned, a special gel is placed on the chewing surface for a few seconds. The tooth is then rinsed with water and dried. Then, the sealant is painted on the tooth. The dental hygienist also may shine a light on the tooth to help harden the sealant. It takes about a minute for the sealant to form a protective shield.

How long do sealants last?

- Sealants can last up to 10 years if applied correctly.

How can I enroll my child in the program?

- School nurse teachers will send SEAL RI! consent forms home to parents. Parents must return the form to the school for their children to participate in the program.

Who can I contact to learn if my child's school participates and for more information?

- **Rhode Island Department of Health Info Line**
401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711
- **www.health.ri.gov/teeth/about/schoolbasedprograms**