



## SMILE! Michigan Dental Sealant Fact Sheet

Oral health is integral to general health.<sup>1</sup> Although preventable, tooth decay is a chronic disease affecting all age groups. In fact, it is the most common chronic disease of childhood.<sup>2</sup> The burden of disease is far worse for those who have restricted access to prevention and treatment services. Tooth decay, left untreated, can cause pain and tooth loss. Untreated tooth decay is associated with difficulty in eating and with being underweight.<sup>3</sup> Untreated decay and tooth loss can have negative effects on an individual's self-esteem and employability.

### What Is The Impact Of Dental Sealants?

Dental sealants are a plastic material placed on the pits and fissures of the chewing surfaces of teeth where up to 90 percent of decay occurs in school children.<sup>4</sup> Sealants prevent tooth decay by creating a barrier between the teeth and decay-causing bacteria. Sealants also stop cavities from growing and can prevent the need for expensive fillings. Sealants are 100 percent effective if they are fully retained on the tooth.<sup>2</sup> According to the Surgeon General's 2000 report on oral health, sealants have been shown to reduce decay by more than 70 percent.<sup>1</sup> The combination of sealants and fluoride has the potential to nearly eliminate tooth decay in school-aged children.<sup>5</sup> Sealants are most cost-effective when provided to children who are at highest risk for tooth decay.<sup>6</sup>

### Why Are School-Based Dental Sealant Programs Recommended?

In 2002, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, a national independent, nonfederal, multidisciplinary task force appointed by the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), strongly recommended school sealant programs as an effective strategy to prevent tooth decay.<sup>3</sup> CDC further estimates that if 50 percent of children at high risk participated in school sealant programs, over half of their tooth decay would be prevented and money would be saved on their treatment costs.<sup>4</sup> School-based sealant programs reduce disparities for children.<sup>7</sup>

### How is Michigan doing?

The 2005-2006 Count Your Smiles survey revealed that:

- ✓ 23 percent of Michigan third-grade children had at least one dental sealant.
- ✓ 58 percent of Michigan third graders had experienced tooth decay.
- ✓ 25 percent of Michigan third graders had untreated tooth decay.

### SMILE! Michigan Dental Sealant Program is Launched!

- ✓ In school year 2007-2008, 13,000 Michigan second graders will receive dental sealants on their first permanent molars.

#### **Healthy People 2010 Objectives<sup>8</sup>**

- ✓ Increase the percent of 8 year old and 14-year-old children with dental sealants on their molar teeth to 50 percent.
- ✓ Reduce decay experience in children under 9 years of age to 42 percent.

#### **Sealants in Michigan**

- ✓ Only 23 percent of Michigan third grade children had at least one sealant present upon examination – second lowest among all states.
- ✓ Just 15 percent of Hispanic third grade children in Michigan had at least one sealant present upon examination.
- ✓ Also, just 17 percent of uninsured third grade children had at least one sealant present upon examination.

- ✓ A \$335,000 grant from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Maternal and Child Health Block Grant will fund this project.
- ✓ Forty-five of 83 Michigan Counties have at least one dental sealant program for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders.
- ✓ More schools will be added in the future depending on funding availability. 40,000 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in schools with greater than 50% participation in the Free and Reduced School Lunch Program are the target population and are eligible. These children are at high risk for dental decay.
- ✓ If funds allow, 6<sup>th</sup> graders should also receive the sealants.

### Strategies for Michigan's Future

- ✓ Develop, promote, and fund additional school-based dental sealants and other population-based programs such as water fluoridation.
- ✓ Increase public awareness of effectiveness of dental sealants to increase demand for sealants.

## References

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