

# Policy on Third-party Reimbursement of Fees Related to Dental Sealants

Originating Committee  
Clinical Affairs Committee

Review Council  
Council on Clinical Affairs

Adopted  
1999

Revised  
2002

## Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recognizes that the placement of sealants and their continued maintenance are scientifically-sound and cost-effective techniques for prevention of pit and fissure caries.

## Background

According to national estimates,<sup>1</sup> by 17 years of age, 78% of children in the United States have experienced dental caries. As much as 90% of all dental caries in school children occurs in pits and fissures. The teeth at highest risk by far are permanent first and second molars where fluoride has its least preventive effect on the pits and fissures.

Current data also show that, although initial sealant retention rates are high, sealant loss does occur at the rate of 10% per year.<sup>2</sup> It is in the patient's interest to receive periodic evaluation of sealants for maintenance or replacement.

Although sealants are safe and effective, their use continues to be low.<sup>3</sup> Sealants are particularly effective in preventing pit and fissure caries and providing cost savings if placed on patients during periods of greatest risk.<sup>4,5</sup> However, initial insurance coverage for sealants often is denied, and insurance coverage for repair and/or replacement may be limited.<sup>6</sup>

## Recommendations

1. The dentition should be periodically evaluated for developmental defects and deep pits and fissures that may contribute to caries risk. Dental sealants should be placed on susceptible teeth and should be evaluated for repair or replacement as part of a periodic dental examination.

2. Insurance coverage for sealants should not be age based, as timing of the eruption of teeth can vary widely.
3. The AAPD shall work with other dental organizations, the insurance industry, and consumer groups to make the advantages of dental sealants understood and to seek reimbursement for fees associated with their placement, maintenance, and repair.

## References

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