

Mission:

To protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

July 2024

Dear School Administrator/School Health Coordinator:

The Florida Department of Health (Department) strongly supports the placement of dental sealants on permanent molars as a primary preventive measure to decrease tooth decay. Tooth decay remains the most prevalent chronic disease in both children and adults, even though it is largely preventable.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 46% of children ages 2-19 years have untreated or restored dental decay in one or more of their primary or permanent teeth.² The CDC recognizes dental sealants as an effective way of preventing tooth decay in permanent molars.

Dental sealants are thin coatings painted on the back teeth that act as a barrier on chewing surfaces to prevent 80% of tooth decay in permanent molars after two years of placement.³ Dental sealants expand the Department's Public Health Dental Program's efforts to reduce tooth decay in school-age children.

The Department's School-Based Sealant Program (S-BSP) Initiative, *Sealing Sunny Smiles Across Florida*, is a component of a comprehensive statewide oral health program to promote evidence-based prevention strategies to achieve optimal oral health for all Floridians. Currently, there are S-BSPs in 65 counties, 56 served by the Department and 9 served by federally qualified health centers. According to the Department's Public Health Dental Program's internal database, the Department's S-BSPs provided more than 518,000 services to more than 119,200 children in the 2023-2024 school year. These programs provide a dental screening, sealants, fluoride varnish application, oral health education, referrals to a dental home, and foster a positive dental presence within each community.

Visit <http://www.flhealth.gov/sealants> to learn more about school-based sealant programs and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbwTus8VSPQ> for more information about sealants. The Department's Public Health Dental Program, as well as most states and health care organizations across the country, firmly supports and continues to recommend dental sealant placement through S-BSPs as a preventive measure for the reduction of tooth decay among children.

Sincerely,

Catherine Bridges, DMD
Dental Executive Director

References:

¹ National Institute of Dental and Cranial Research Dental Caries (Tooth Decay) November 2022.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention FastStats- Oral and Dental Health May 22, 2024.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dental Sealant Facts May 15, 2024.