

Mission:

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



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

August 15, 2022

Dear School Administrator/School Health Coordinator:

Poor oral health correlates with many diseases, including heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, diabetes, obesity, and premature and low birth weight infants.¹⁻⁶ One of the Healthy People 2030 Goals is to improve oral health by increasing access to oral health care, including preventive services.⁷ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends state oral health programs expand sealant delivery in low-income and rural schools as a strategy for preventive intervention that evidence shows improves oral health.⁸ The Florida Department of Health (Department) strongly supports early placement of dental sealants on permanent molars as a primary preventive measure to decrease tooth decay (cavities).

Dental sealants are thin coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of molar teeth. Sealants protect the chewing surfaces from cavities by covering them with a protective shield that blocks out germs and food. Once applied, sealants protect against 80 percent of cavities for two years and continue to protect against 50 percent of cavities for up to four years. Children ages 6-11 without sealants have almost three times more first molar cavities than those with sealants. Children and adolescents from families with low incomes are at least seven percent less likely than their counterparts from families with higher incomes to have sealants and twice as likely to have untreated cavities.⁹

The Department's school-based sealant program 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 48 counties throughout the state with Department sponsored, school-based dental sealant programs. According to the Department's Health Management System, these programs provided 213,185 dental sealants and over 648,000 assessments, cleanings, fluoride applications, oral hygiene instructions to approximately 46,300 children in the 2021-2022 school year. These programs foster a positive dental presence within each community by providing preventive dental care to children who are most at-risk for developing cavities. Please allow school-based sealant program personnel to provide services in schools and give them your full support.

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.

Sincerely,

Catherine E. Bridges DMD

Catherine E. Bridges, DMD

State Dental Executive Director

Florida Department of Health
Public Health Dental Program, Bureau of Family
Health Services, Division of Community Health
Promotion

4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-14 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1701
PHONE: 850/245-4328 • FAX: 850/414-7552

FloridaHealth.gov



Accredited Health Department
Public Health Accreditation Board

References

- ¹ [How oral health may affect your heart, brain and risk of death | American Heart Association](#)
- ² [Role of oral bacteria in respiratory infection - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- ³ [Diabetes and Teeth - American Dental Association \(mouthhealthy.org\)](#)
- ⁴ [Not So Sweet Tooth Campaign | Florida Department of Health \(floridahealth.gov\)](#)
- ⁵ [DentalCariesWebinarMarionCounty.pdf \(floridahealth.gov\) Dr. Jaana Gold](#)
- ⁶ [Pregnancy and Oral Health Feature | CDC](#)
- ⁷ [Oral Conditions - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](#)
- ⁸ [Implementation of Evidence-Based Preventive Interventions | State-Base Oral Health Programs | Division of Oral Health | CDC](#)
- ⁹ National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center.2021. *Dental Sealants: A Resource Guide* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. [Integrating Oral Health Care into Primary Care: A Resource Guide | National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center \(mchoralhealth.org\)](#)