

CDC urges dental sealants for all low-income children

October 19 2016



(HealthDay)—Treatments that seal a child's back teeth can prevent most

cavities, but many children—particularly those living in poverty—don't get them, according to research published in the Oct. 18 early-release issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Sealants can cut cavities by 80 percent for up to two years, and by 50 percent for up to four years, a new CDC report shows. "Unfortunately, most kids don't have them—40 percent of kids have [dental sealants](#), but 60 percent don't," Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., director of the CDC, said during a news conference. "Kids without dental sealants have almost three times more cavities than those who do have sealants."

Low-income children are more than twice as likely as children in more affluent families to have untreated tooth decay, the report found. "School-based sealant programs can be a win-win," Frieden said. "Governments, schools, parents, and kids all come out ahead. Dental sealants are simple, quick, easy, and completely painless; there are no unwanted side effects; and the benefits start immediately."

Frieden added that progress has been made with dental sealants in the past decade. In that period, the number of children from low-income families who had dental sealants increased nearly 70 percent. "This prevented about one million [cavities](#), but still, poorer children are 20 percent less likely to have sealants than children from higher-income families," he said. "Every tooth that gets sealant saves \$11.70 in dental costs." Sealants for 6.5 million low-income children in schools could save up to \$300 million in dental care costs.

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Citation: CDC urges dental sealants for all low-income children (2016, October 19) retrieved 2 February 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-cdc-urges-dental-sealants-low-income.html>

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