



**Dentist**

**Dr Lincoln Tentena**

## Stopping cavities before they start

**D**ental fissure sealants are one of the simplest yet most effective methods to prevent tooth decay, especially in children. They act as a protective barrier, covering the deep grooves and pits found on the chewing surfaces of back teeth. These areas are often difficult to clean with a toothbrush, making them more prone to decay.

Fissure sealants are thin fillings applied to the chewing surfaces of molars and premolars. Once hardened, they create a smooth surface that prevents food particles and bacteria from settling into the natural pits of the teeth.

The process of applying a pit and fissure sealant is quick and painless, requiring no drilling. First, the dentist cleans the tooth, applies a special gel to prepare the surface, rinses it off, and then paints on the sealant. A curing light is often used to harden the material within seconds.

### Who benefits most?

Sealants are particularly recommended for children and teenagers because their newly erupted permanent molars are especially vulnerable to decay. Adults with deep grooves can also benefit from sealants if their teeth have natural pits that trap food. By sealing these areas early, dentists can prevent cavities before they develop, helping patients avoid fillings, extractions, and discomfort later on.

### How long do sealants last?

Sealants can last for several years, although they may wear down over time. Dentists check them during routine visits and will reapply them if necessary. With proper care, they can protect teeth throughout the cavity-prone years of childhood and adolescence.

### When are sealants not used?

Sealants are not applied to teeth that already have cavities or large fillings. They are also unnecessary on the smooth surfaces of teeth where decay is unlikely.

Dental fissure sealants are a straightforward, painless, and highly effective way to protect teeth from decay. By covering vulnerable grooves, they help both children and adults maintain healthier smiles with fewer cavities. For families in Uganda and beyond, sealants represent a wise investment in long-term oral health.

