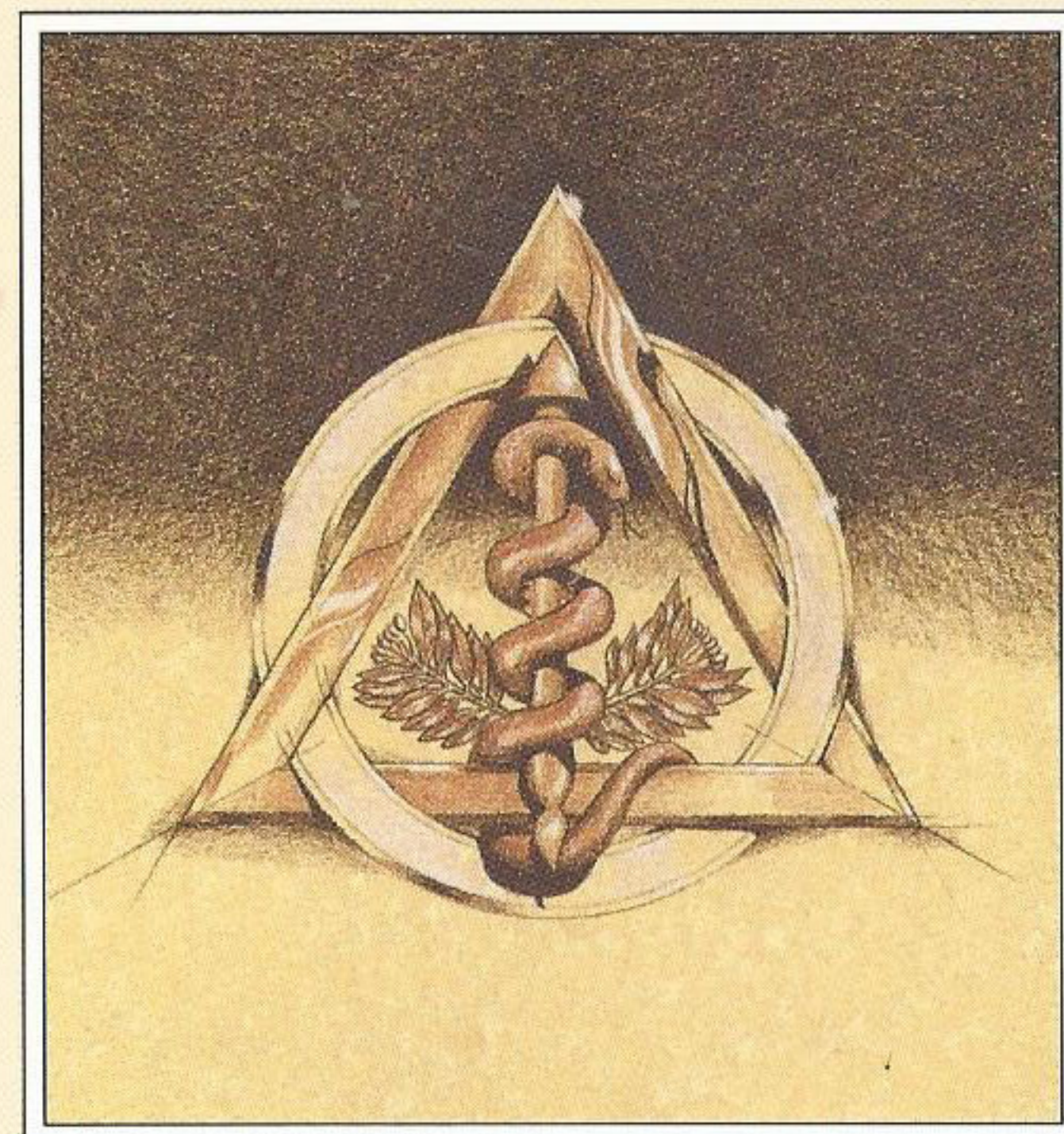


# PIT & FISSURE SEALANTS



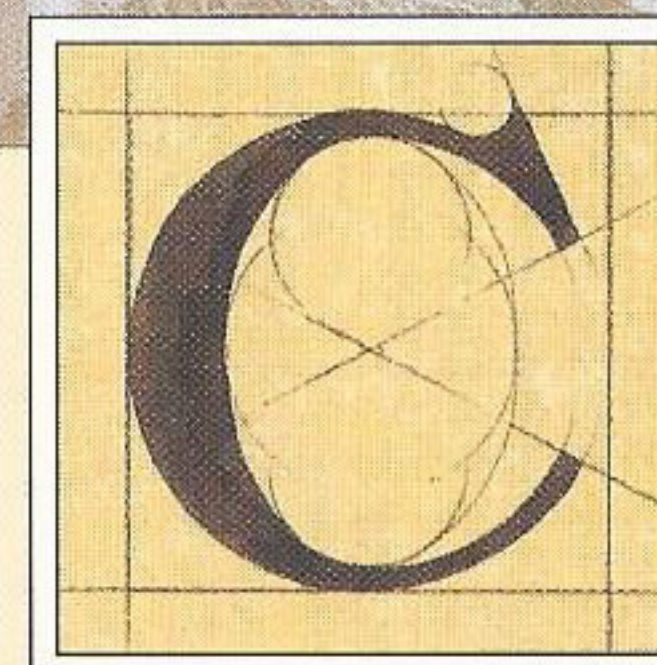
A SMARTPATIENT™ GUIDE

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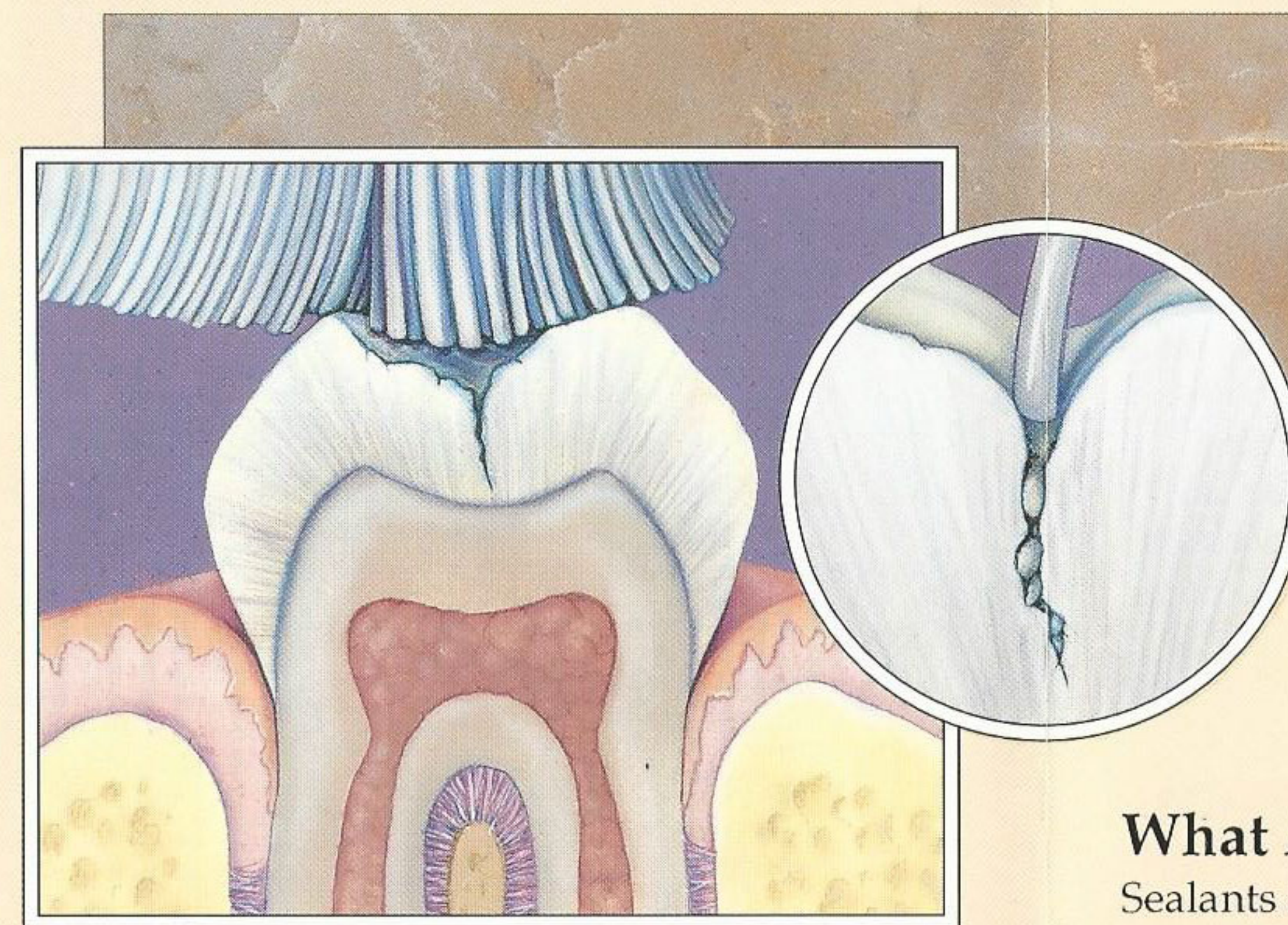
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Medical illustrations by May Cheney.



Chances are you've picked up this brochure because you're interested in **preventing decay** in your child's teeth. While sealants are by no means a cure-all in preventing all forms of tooth decay, they are helpful to patients – particularly children – in controlling decay in certain areas of the mouth.



## What Are Sealants?

Sealants are a clear, acrylic-like material that helps shield decay-causing bacteria from the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. It is recommended that sealants be applied to a child's primary (baby) molars by the age of three or four years. Once the six-year molars (the first permanent back teeth) appear, it is best to apply sealants as soon as possible. As a child's most cavity-prone years continue until the mid-teens, the premolars should also be sealed as they appear.

## How Can Sealants Prevent Decay?

Sealant material bonds to the chewing surface of the back teeth, forming a **protective barrier** covering the pits and fissures (depressions and grooves). Sealants are an **intermediate preventive step** in delaying or preventing tooth decay on these areas of back teeth.

## Are Sealants Suitable For All Teeth?

Not really. You see, we apply this material only to the **chewing surfaces of back teeth**. Sealants aren't meant for areas between back teeth or front teeth. Teeth that already have fillings or detectable decay are not sealed.

Adults may also have sealants placed on the chewing surfaces of non-restored back teeth.

## How Are Sealants Applied?

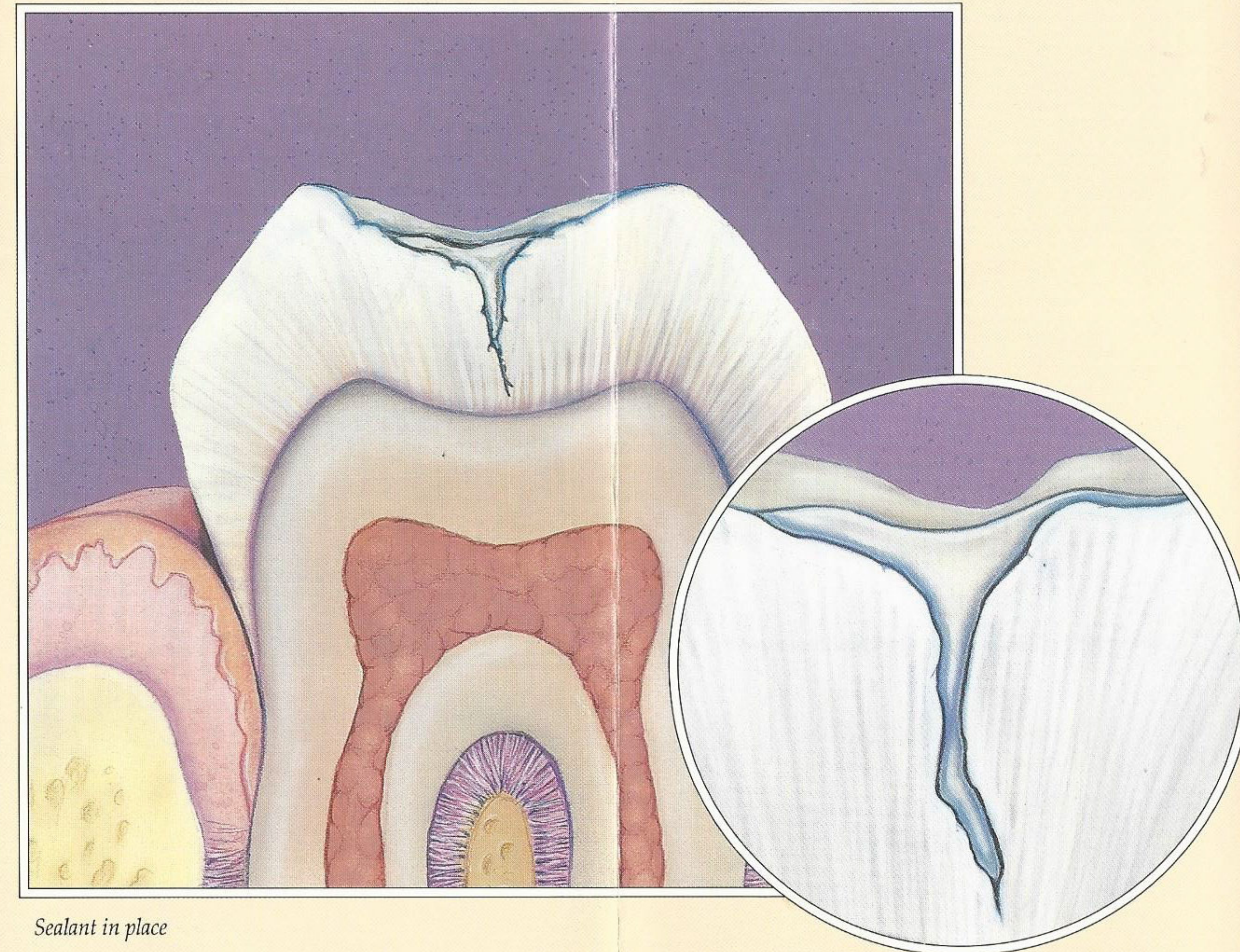
We apply sealant material to a clean tooth. First, a mild acid solution is gently applied to the chewing surface. This prepares the tooth enamel to bond more effectively to the sealant material. Next, the tooth is thoroughly washed and dried. Finally, the sealant material is applied to the tooth. **It only takes a few minutes** for the sealant to harden. Then we check the bite. That's all there is to it.

## Now That Your Teeth Have Been Sealed...

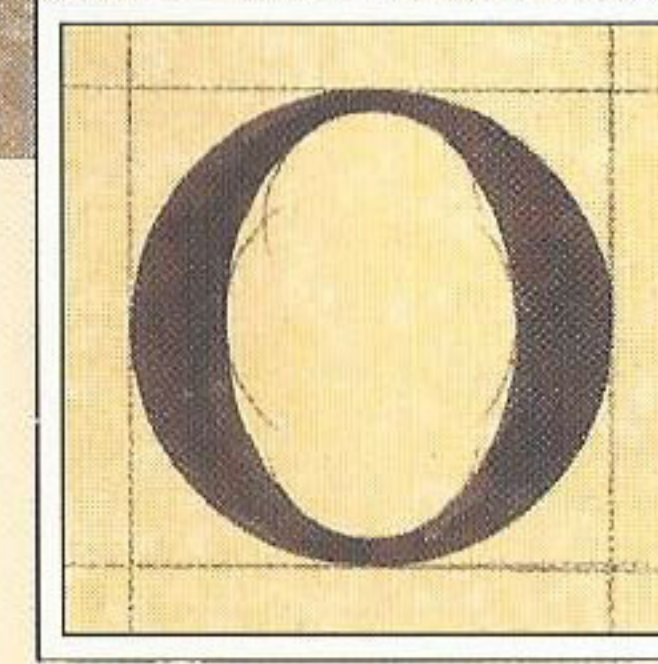
Sealant material is quite durable, but it is a good idea to occasionally check to make sure it is still in place. (Chewing on ice cubes, hard candy or sticky foods should be avoided.) Following are some **great snack alternatives** that combined with sealants and fluoride, reduce your chances of tooth decay. These foods include: peanut butter, popcorn, fresh vegetables (carrot sticks, celery stalks), fruit (unpeeled apples, orange sections, bananas, grapes, raisins), yogurt, dry (unsweetened) cereal and sugar-free granola, cheese and sugar-free popsicles.

## How Long Do Sealants Last?

Depending on your chewing pattern, the sealant effect can last for a number of years. At recall appointments we always check to make sure the sealant material is intact.



Sealant in place



*Our goal is to help preserve your smile throughout a lifetime, and sealants help make that possible.*

## Sealants Don't Take The Place Of Fluoride

Are sealants and fluoride the same thing? No. Both materials are designed to **preserve and prolong the life of your teeth** through prevention of dental decay. They act quite differently, however. **Sealants are applied topically only to certain areas** of individual teeth, and are a visible sign that the tooth is being protected.

**Fluoride** may be used effectively from prenatal stages through the adolescent period (that's when kids are at their highest cavity-prone age). Unlike sealants, fluoride is supplied in a variety of forms, including:

- **topical application** to your teeth during a routine dental exam and cleaning (in a gel or solution)
- **drinking water** where fluoride has been added
- **prescribed nutritional supplements** (useful in areas where drinking water does not contain fluoride)
- **commercially prepared mouth rinses** used at home
- **numerous toothpastes**

## Five-Step Approach

Preventive dentistry is a five-step approach. Optimal decay prevention includes:

- regular brushing and flossing
- routine fluoride application
- sealants when indicated by your dentist
- balanced diet as a way of life
- regular checkups every six months

## A Final Note...

If you have any further questions about sealants, please ask us. Sealants are a proven technique that may be suitable for preventing decay. Our goal is to help preserve your smile throughout a lifetime, and sealants help make that possible.