

Preventing tooth decay in children

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Credit: Cardiff University

Applying fluoride varnish to children's teeth is just as effective at preventing tooth decay as the alternative method of sealing teeth and could save the NHS money, concludes a study led by Cardiff University.

The 'Seal or Varnish?' study, in collaboration with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Community Dental Service, treated just over 800 children with either fissure sealants or [fluoride](#) varnish to discover which treatment is most effective and offers the best value for money for children aged six to seven years.

Fissure sealants are plastic coatings applied to teeth to stop food and

bacteria from becoming stuck and last for several years. Alternatively, fluoride varnish can be applied to [teeth](#) twice a year to give added protection.

In children who had the fluoride varnish treatment, 17.5 percent had decay in their molars that was bad enough to need a filling or for the tooth to be taken out after three years. In the sealant treated group, 19.6 percent of [children](#) had decay in their first molars. Over the three [years](#) there was a cost saving of £68.13 per child in the varnish group.

Professor Ivor Chestnutt, from Cardiff University's School of Dentistry, who led the study, said: "Our research has shown that the fluoride varnish does prevent [tooth decay](#) just as well as a more difficult and expensive treatment. Fluoride varnish is simple to apply and requires less complex intervention than that required for placing plastic sealants..."



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Provided by Cardiff University

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