

# COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

## North Dakota school-based sealant program identifies increased need for dental treatment and prevention

The school-based sealant program (SEALIND) is managed by the North Dakota Oral Health Program. SEALIND provides dental screenings, fluoride varnish application and dental sealants for students in grades K-12. SEALIND evaluation data demonstrate the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on students' oral health.

### 2020-2021 School Year:

In 36 participating schools, roughly one out of two students presented with untreated decay.



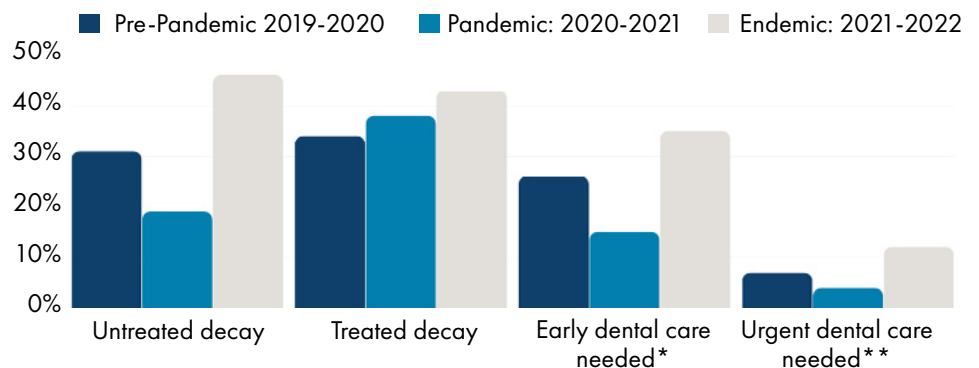
#### Untreated decay:

At least one tooth with decay not treated; includes rampant decay.

#### Rampant decay:

Decay present on seven or more teeth.

The percentages of students with decay and need for dental care were higher during the 2021-2022 school year than prior to the pandemic and even higher yet than rates reported during. Data demonstrate the impact of a global shutdown on the oral health status of children in schools with greater than 45% of the students covered by the free and reduced-fee lunch program.



\* Decay present without pain or swelling. Refer to a dentist for treatment.

\*\* Pain, infection, large decay, abscess, or draining. Immediate referral for treatment.

### Why do students have more untreated decay (cavities)?

Children experience decay for many reasons, but data from the SEALIND program demonstrate that there was a relation between decreased prevention efforts and an increase in decay.

Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) had no dental visit in the 2021-22 school year, an increase from 12% the year before.



The year prior, 31% of students had an exposed molar that had not been sealed. During the 2021-22 school year, 3 out of every 5 (59%) students had exposed molars that required sealants.



Learn more about SEALIND at: [hhs.nd.gov/SEALIND](https://hhs.nd.gov/SEALIND)

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