

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.



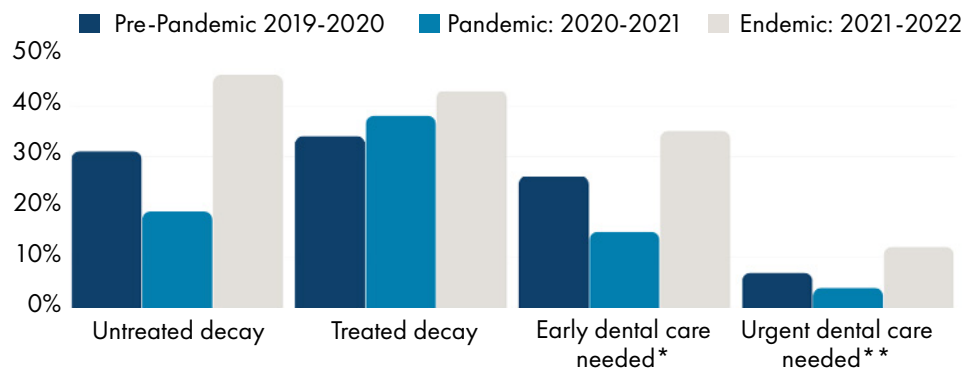
Untreated decay:

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/SEALND

For questions on evaluation data, email Shawnda.schroeder@und.edu