

Within the dental profession there has been an ongoing debate about the use of amalgam as a filling material. In an attempt to clarify any questions regarding the use of amalgam (silver and mercury) versus composite (plastic) I have written this explanation for my patients.

There are certain advantages to amalgam that make it a choice that we offer in our office. The materials are less expensive than composite. It is a much easier product to work with, thus making the procedure faster and thereby less expensive to you, the patient. It is a material that has been used for over 150 years, has a long life and is very predictable. Yet there is a concern that questions the safety of the material.

The mercury in the filling is chemically bound to the silver. Because the mercury is bound to the silver, no free mercury is exposed to the body. Yet, there have been allegations that minute amounts of mercury vapor is released from the material. The American Dental Association, the National Institute of health, the American Medical Association have all reviewed the issue and have come to the conclusion that there is not a problem.

Numerous nonscientific journals have published reports linking mercury amalgam to an array of diseases. These journals however are not reliable with no scientific controlled standards that are accepted within the medical profession. It is often considered scare tactics to promote their point of view.

Our alternative to amalgam is composite or gold or porcelain inlays. The advantages of composite filling, is that it is tooth colored and bonds to tooth structure. Bonding to tooth structure is important, because it makes the tooth stronger and helps prevent dental decay.

Yet, there are certain disadvantages to composites. The material is very difficult to work with. Thus the results are not always as predictable. In addition, due to the more expensive material costs and the significantly increased time to do the procedure, these fillings are considerably more expensive. These fillings can be 40 to 60 percent more expensive than amalgam fillings.

If you have insurance, most insurance companies will pay 80 percent of the charge of an amalgam filling. Insurance companies consider a white filling to be cosmetic. They will pay their portion for the filling, but at the amalgam price. So, if you have a composite filling done, your costs can be increased by up to eighty dollars depending on the size of the filling.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me, or one of my staff. We will gladly take the time to explain the issues.

Please sign and indicate the choice below if you want us to use amalgam or not.

1. It is ok with me to use amalgam on my filling
2. I would prefer that amalgam not be used and please use composite for my filling. I am aware of my responsibility for the increased costs of the filling material.

Signature _____ Date _____