

WHY GOLD AND NOT SILVER

Q. - My dentist suggest a gold crown for a back tooth instead of silver. Can you comment on this?

A. - Silver amalgam fillings are made from metal particles combined with mercury. Mercury has many drawbacks when used as an ingredient in dental restorations so many dentists avoid using silver fillings in their patients' mouths.

Mercury retains its characteristics in fillings. Heat and cold makes it expand and contract, just as it does in thermometers. It has high volatile pressure, as we've seen in mercury vapor lamps. It oxidizes easily...corrodes rapidly. These qualities weaken fillings.

Let's quote from a research article in the **Journal of the American Dental Association**: *"Not only is marginal breakdown the most commonly evidenced type of deterioration seen in amalgam (silver) restorations, but it appears to be characteristic in present alloy systems"*. The weak edges of the silver fillings often breakdown, and the unprotected enamel tooth structure chips away.

In the ADA's **Dental Abstracts** is a review of an article from **Oral Surgery**. It's about research done at the University of Texas. We quote: *"For the tooth that is already seriously damaged, an amalgam restoration is not the preferred treatment. The MOD onlay and 3/4 crown should be used more frequently. They protect the cusps (biting edges) and help prevent the cracked-tooth syndrome and fractured posterior cusps."* Silver fillings are supported by tooth structure. They do not protect teeth from chewing pressures. These pressures are tremendous. Your jaws close with the impact of about 300 pounds/square inch. This can build up to 68,000 pounds of pressure on the tip of a cusp, enough to crack a tooth under certain conditions. If the tooth is plugged up with silver amalgam, the unsupported enamel can crack.

The Journal of the International Federation of Dentistry had an article that reported, *"Hot food may cause gradual shrinkage in amalgam fillings. This process may account for some leakage around dental fillings."* The studies were done at the University of Virginia.

With all these negative characteristics, would you want to restore part of your body with something that cracks, shrinks, deteriorates, and breaks? Large amalgam fillings have been referred to as "tooth caskets," because they often lead to breakdown and root canal therapy. Devalitized teeth most often need restoration with a crown... that should have been done in the first place. If the silver filling was originally placed to save money, you can see how it can actually require a greater outlay. And you end up with less. **Ben Franklin once said, "the wise man does in the beginning what the fool does in the end"**.

What about your health? Mercury is toxic. It's a poison.

An article in the **Journal of the International Academy of Preventative Medicine** discusses the hypothesis that mercury in silver fillings leaches out daily. We quote from it: *"Newly developed atomic absorption for mercury detection have revealed mercury not only in the urine, but in the blood cells as well...Further, it has been exciting to note that the mercury levels in the urine drop substantially within 24 hours following the removal of mercury from the oral cavity. It has been chilling to see changes in the differential count of white cells within 24 hours of mercury removal...considering that the finished amalgam restoration contains an average of 35% to 50% mercury, we can understand how chronic poisoning may occur as corrosion takes place"*.

With all this information, one wonders why amalgam fillings are still so commonly placed. Perhaps it is because they are so easy, and because the initial cost is so low. Yet if you value the health of your teeth and your body, I would suggest you follow your dentist's advice and have the gold crown for your tooth. ***Adapted from HEALTH QUARTERLY + 2.**



Phil McCavity says
"Just Floss 'Em"

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