

SILVER FILLING CONTROVERSY

"Are silver fillings safe?" The answer is **yes or no**, depending on which research and evidence is accepted as valid. This controversy has existed ever since amalgam fillings (which contain mercury, silver, copper, tin, and zinc) were introduced in the 1820's. The issue is not if mercury is a toxin, but if the *amount* of mercury in amalgam fillings is enough to be toxic and contribute to illness in *humans*. The American Dental Association (ADA) and the majority of dentists believe that the amount of mercury that leaches out from amalgams over a person's lifetime does not pose a health risk, except in rare instances. A minority of researchers, physicians, and dentists believe that amalgams are an unrecognized serious health risk to all people, the effects being varied depending on the person! The following information is presented solely to summarize both sides of the issue, so that the issue can be discussed intelligently and objectively.

AMALGAM IS SAFE VIEWPOINT:

The ADA's Council on Scientific Affairs' 1998 report on its review of the recent scientific literature on amalgam states: "The Council concludes that, based on available scientific information, amalgam continues to be a safe and effective restorative material." The Council's report also states, "There currently appears to be no justification for discontinuing the use of dental amalgam."

More information on the ADA's official position on amalgam fillings (as of April, 2007) can be found at: <http://ada.org/prof/resources/positions/statements/amalgam.asp>

The Food and Drug Administration, National Institute of Dental Research, United States Public Health Service, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and Consumers Union (publisher of Consumers Report), are in agreement with the ADA. Amalgam is the least costly, quickest, and practical way to restore teeth. Hundreds of thousands of amalgams are placed daily, and if there were a significant problem, it would be of epidemic proportion. When mercury is mixed with the other components that make up the amalgam filling, stable compounds are formed, and only trace amounts of metallic mercury remain. There is no convincing evidence that the small amount of mercury vapor from amalgams has any effect on humans. More significant sources of mercury exposure are food, water, and air. Everyone is exposed to mercury from these sources. Studies done on people with amalgam fillings showed no correlation between the fillings and complaints such as dizziness, headache, fatigue, nervousness, depression, or joint pain. Another study found no elevated mercury in the blood and urine samples of patients over a 1 year period. The group most likely to suffer from mercury toxicity would be dentists and their assistants, who are regularly exposed to mercury vapor, yet data suggests that dentists are in as good or better health than the general population. Dr. Flanders, of the Illinois Department of Public Health, reported on 15 studies that all basically state that the scientific evidence demonstrates that the contribution of dental amalgam to the daily body burden of mercury is minor, and no adverse health effects can be attributed to amalgam restorations. Testimonials by patients of being cured of disease upon removal of amalgam fillings were not balanced with accounts of patients who did not get better. If the mercury released from amalgam fillings builds up in the body tissues and reaches toxic levels over time, then overnight cures should not be possible. The unjustified removal of amalgams is an unnecessary risk and expense. Sound tooth structure is frequently removed, increasing the potential for other complications. Do not let sensational television "documentaries" or fear be the reason for having amalgams removed. Keep the issue in perspective.

A few studies indicate that a sealant (unfilled resin), which is similar to a composite (filled resin), caused an estrogen-like effect from bis-phenol A in children after being placed in their teeth. If alternative dental filling materials may have potential side-effects, isn't it better to stay with established materials that are physically strong, practical, and cost-effective?

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AMALGAM IS UNSAFE VIEWPOINT:

Mercury toxicity experts all over the world believe that amalgam should not be used, and there is much research to support this position. In 2008, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark banned the use of amalgam. Germany and Austria have restrictions on amalgam use. Some healthcare practitioners believe amalgams should be removed using specific protocols to enable the body to successfully eliminate any stored mercury in the tissues. A protocol may involve body chemistry analysis and biocompatibility testing from blood, hair, and urine samples; vitamin and mineral supplements; removal of toxic materials in a particular sequence determined through measurement of the electric current generated by each amalgam filling; intravenous chelation therapy; and nutritional and lifestyle counseling. Other protocols utilize electrodermal screening, homeopathy, or other alternative therapies. Be aware that many of these protocols are empirical, but the concept is that there must be regard for physiologic issues. Furthermore, the controversy includes the other kinds of materials used in crowns, bridges, fillings, and full and partial dentures too. Also, you should understand that dental treatment to remove a possible source of toxicity is a separate issue from medical treatment to detoxify the body. You likely will need both to give your body a chance to heal.

The approximately 440 symptoms that have been reported to have responded to toxic dental material removal can be grouped into 6 general categories:

1. NEUROLOGICAL - Some examples being tremors, headaches, emotional instability, anxiety, unexplained depression, and memory loss.
2. CARDIOVASCULAR - Some examples being abnormal blood pressure and abnormal heart rhythm.
3. ORAL DISORDERS - Some examples being bleeding gums, metallic taste, burning sensation, canker sores, and excessive saliva
4. IMMUNOLOGICAL - Some examples being leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, multiple sclerosis, ALS, lupus erythematosus, scleroderma, and mononucleosis.
5. GASTROINTESTINAL - Some examples being food sensitivities, abdominal cramps, chronic diarrhea or constipation.
6. SYSTEMIC - Some examples being dermatitis, thyroid disturbance, chronic fatigue, infertility, birth defects, allergies, excessive perspiration, unexplained anemia, and adrenal disease.

Many of these conditions are actually misdiagnosed, and as a result, conventional treatment is not helpful or appropriate. Keep in mind that diseases are complex and multiple factors are most often involved, therefore consultation with dentists, physicians, and other health care professionals who are knowledgeable in environmental illness is strongly recommended.

Dr. Hal Huggins' Coors Study found significant changes in the areas of blood chemistry (hemoglobin, oxyhemoglobin, porphyrins, cholesterol, creatine (phospho) kinase, total protein, white blood cells, and lymphocyte viability) in persons after their existing amalgams were removed and replaced with composite, and then when those new composites were removed and replaced with new amalgams.

As for the possible estrogen-mimicking effect of bis-phenol A, although composite may not be the perfect restorative material, it is far better than amalgam.

Even if it were true that only a small percentage of people were negatively affected by amalgam, shouldn't the dental profession be promoting treatment protocols for the negative side-effects rather than minimizing the issue?

This information is provided for educational purposes only, and should not be considered a recommendation for any particular treatment, product, or philosophy. You have the sole responsibility to examine the benefits and risks of available options and decide what treatment, if any, is to be rendered. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution grants the right to discuss openly and freely all matters of public concern, and to express viewpoints no matter how controversial or unaccepted they may be.

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