

## *Important Information: Composite (White) Fillings*

### **General Information**

A dental filling is any material that restores the normal shape and function of a tooth which has a portion missing due to decay or fracture. Most front teeth and some back teeth are filled with tooth-colored material known as composite. It is made of plastic, quartz, and other fillers that give it strength and shine. A properly placed composite filling will last for years provided it is maintained with good oral hygiene and regular professional cleanings.

### **Limitations**

Composite is best used in small cavities. When it is used to fill back teeth in place of the more common silver amalgam fillings, it is less durable. When more than one-half of the tooth is missing, when some or all of the biting edge of a front tooth is missing, or when one of the cusps (points) of a back tooth is missing, a crown (cap) should be considered instead of composite. Crowns are stronger and will withstand greater chewing forces than will composite. Experience has also shown that a small percentage of people will experience some hypersensitivity to this material---especially when it is used to fill back teeth. In these rare instances, removal of the composite filling and replacement with a different material may be necessary and additional costs may result.

### **Notify Your Dentist If You Notice Any Of The Following:**

1. Floss tears or catches in the area where the new filling was placed.
2. The tooth with the new filling seems to touch first before your other teeth come together.
3. The tooth becomes sore after you chew your food.
4. The tooth aches and over the counter pain medications like Tylenol or Advil will not relieve the ache.

### **Instructions For After Your Appointment and For the Long Term:**

1. If you received a local anesthetic, do not attempt to chew or drink anything until the numbness wears off. While numb, it is very easy to bite or burn your tongue, cheek or lip without knowing you are doing it.
2. If you received a local anesthetic, you may have some soreness in the area of the injection. This soreness will subside over a few days. Warm salt water rinses will sooth the area.
3. Extra care should be taken to brush and clean the filling because decay is more likely to occur at the junction of the tooth and the filling.

4. You may notice the tooth with the new filling is sensitive to heat and/or cold. This temperature sensitivity should decrease over the next few weeks. Avoid extremely hot or cold foods and liquids during this period.
5. Occasionally teeth that have been filled will ache for the first few days after the new filling is placed. Over the counter pain medications will normally relieve any discomfort you experience while the tooth is returning to normal. Unless you have restrictions on their use, those medications that have anti-inflammatory properties (Advil and aspirin are the most common) usually give the best results. However, if the nerve was unhealthy or significantly damaged prior to this treatment, the ache may not subside and may even get worse as time passes. This means that the nerve is dying and the tooth will require further treatment. Contact your dentist if the ache or sensitivity does not improve or gets worse.
6. Composite fillings are not unbreakable. Avoid chewing ice, hard candy, etc. Also avoid habits like chewing on fingernails, pens, etc. If a composite filling breaks more than once, a crown should be considered as a stronger replacement.
7. Composite fillings are more susceptible to stains. Avoid coffee, tea, and other staining foods if you want to keep them looking good. Smoking will also discolor them.