

## *Important Information: Amalgam (Silver) 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. The most common filling material used in dentistry is silver amalgam. It has been used for more than 100 years and has the longest history of safety and success of all dental filling materials. Amalgam is commonly used in the back teeth for simple and complex fillings. It is made from metals which are mixed in a puttylike consistency and forced into a specially shaped hole drilled into the tooth. A properly placed amalgam filling will last for years provided it is maintained with good oral hygiene and regular professional cleanings.

### **Limitations**

Amalgam is best used in small cavities. When more than one-half of the tooth is missing or when one of the cusps (points) of the tooth is missing, a crown (cap) should be considered instead of amalgam. Crowns are stronger and will withstand greater chewing forces than will amalgam.

### **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 saltwater rinses will sooth the area.
3. No biting pressure should be used on the side of the mouth where the filling was placed. After 24 hours, you can resume normal biting pressure.
4. 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.

5. Amalgam transfers heat and cold to the nerve much faster than the natural tooth material so 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.
6. 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.
7. Amalgam fillings are not unbreakable. Avoid chewing ice, hard candy, etc. Also avoid habits like chewing fingernails, pens, etc. If an amalgam filling breaks more than once, a crown should be considered as a stronger replacement.