

FAQ's About Silver Fillings

What is a Silver Filling?

A silver filling is an “amalgam” or metal filling that builds back missing tooth structure to its original form.

What material is in a Silver Filling?

A silver filling is a mixture of silver, mercury, tin, copper and zinc. The mercury binds the other metals together to form a strong material once the silver filling has set.

What are the benefits of a Silver Filling?

Silver fillings have long-term durability, relative low cost and good strength once they have set. They are well suited for teeth that your dentist is unable to keep clean and dry as they set well even in a moist environment. Due to the material in them, amalgams are able to kill some decay causing bacteria.

What are the risks of a Silver Filling?

As with any filling, having a silver filling involves some inherent risks both to the remaining tooth structure and to the silver filling itself:

- *Silver fillings require removal of decay which necessarily reduces remaining tooth structure*
- *Silver fillings may fracture; the larger the silver filling, the greater the risk of fracture*
- *Silver fillings may decay around the edge of the filling if your dentist is unable to get a good seal between the tooth and the silver filling when placing the filling*
- *The edge of a silver filling may chip out over time, making the tooth more susceptible to fracture or decay*
- *Preparing for and placing silver filling can irritate the tooth and cause “post-operative” sensitivity which may last for up to 3 months*
- *Teeth which have had silver fillings may need a root canal treatment less than 1% of the time during the lifetime of the tooth*
- *Silver fillings are silver in color and do not match the natural color of teeth; over time silver fillings may turn your natural tooth a grey color*
- *Although no proven health risks for silver fillings exist, controversy has surrounded the fact that they contain mercury which is a heavy metal*

What are the alternatives to having a Silver Filling?

1. *Having a tooth colored filling or “composite” placed*
2. *Having a gold or porcelain inlay/onlay restoration placed*

How can an existing bite affect a Silver Filling?

- *Excessive biting forces or untreated bite problems may lead to the silver filling breaking or loosening*
- *Excessive biting forces or untreated bite problems may lead to the tooth in which the silver filling has been placed breaking or loosening*

Are there post-treatment restrictions once I have a Silver Filling?

Silver fillings may chip or break if used for abnormal activities (e.g. biting fishing line, sewing thread or finger nails, opening bottles)