

Amalgam Fillings: Patient Education Conversation Points

The best approach to any treatment is shared decision making between you and your patient. If amalgam fillings are an option to treat cavities, your patient may have questions about the material. Share this guide with your team so every member has simple, consistent language to use when explaining amalgam fillings.

What is Dental Amalgam and How Is It Used?

- Dental amalgam is a silver-colored cavity filling material made from silver, copper, tin, zinc, and mercury
- Amalgam fillings have been used to treat cavities for over 100 years and more than 100 million Americans have received them.
- Dental amalgam is a safe, affordable and durable restorative material with unique characteristics that sometimes make it the best option for saving a person's tooth, especially for back teeth that have large cavities or a cavity below the gumline.
- Dental amalgam is one type of dental filling material, the other option that has become more popular even for back teeth because they look natural are tooth-colored composites or glass ionomers.
- The type of filling you get can be based on many factors, such as size and location of the cavity, and your health history. Let's talk through your options and what would be best for your dental health.

Addressing Health, Safety and Environmental Concerns

- As your dentist, I base my treatment recommendations on the best-available scientific evidence, clinical experience and your health needs and preferences.
- There is mercury in amalgam, but when combined with the other metals, it forms a safe, stable material.
- Amalgam fillings release an extremely small amount of mercury vapor—so small it's in the billionths of an ounce.
- Dental amalgam does not contain methylmercury, which is what you hear about in connection with seafood. Methylmercury is of greater concern to human health.
- People who have existing amalgam fillings can rest assured they are safe and don't need to be removed as long as they are in good condition.
- Credible scientific studies show no cause for alarm with amalgam. To date, there has been no properly designed scientific study demonstrating that this material causes any long-term health effects or disease.
- Less than 1% of mercury released to the environment from man-made sources comes from dentistry, according to the EPA.
- Since 2020, U.S. dentists have used amalgam separators to prevent the release of particles into the environment and allow for the long term collection of retained amalgam over a long period of time to be recycled.