

The facts on fillings



More than 100 million silver fillings are placed each year in the United States.

The facts on fillings

“Silver” fillings — the most common type of dental filling — are a combination of silver, mercury, tin and copper. They are also referred to as “amalgam” fillings, which is the term for the metals bonded together. Mercury is necessary because it triggers the chemical reaction that hardens the filling once it is set in the tooth. More than 100 million of these fillings are placed each year in the United States.

A hundred year history

Since 1895, scientists have been studying mercury as a safe and effective material for use in dental fillings. Scientists have proven that mercury, in small, specified amounts, does not pose a health threat to patients. The mercury released from your fillings is actually less than the amount naturally occurring in food, air and water. Mercury specifications were standardized by the American Dental Association (ADA) in 1932 to ensure the proper universal use of mercury in fillings.

The allergic few

In extremely rare cases, some patients may experience a hypersensitivity or allergy to mercury. These reactions are usually seen as a rash on the mouth and face, similar to other types of allergies. Once the filling has been removed and replaced with gold, porcelain or a compound substance, the symptoms disappear within a few days.

According to the ADA Journal, a study conducted by French researchers from 1905 to 1986 found only 41 published cases of allergic reactions to mercury in fillings. That’s a very small amount when you consider the more than 100 million amalgam fillings placed every year.

Just the facts

While scientific research continues to prove the safety of amalgam fillings, some dentists may still try to scare patients into replacing fillings unnecessarily. Know the facts, and be sure to confirm any diagnosis of mercury allergy with a medical specialist, such as an allergist or dermatologist, before agreeing to any tests or amalgam filling removals. Fillings should be replaced only if the restoration is defective or worn.

Visit Delta Dental’s web site at: www.deltadentalins.com

Delta Dental’s Mission: To advance dental health and access through exceptional dental benefits service, technology and professional support.

Delta Dental includes these companies in these states:

Delta Dental of California – CA • Delta Dental of Pennsylvania – PA & MD • Delta Dental of West Virginia – WV • Delta Dental of Delaware – DE • Delta Dental of the District of Columbia – DC • Delta Dental of New York – NY • Delta Dental Insurance Company – AL, FL, GA, LA, MT, MS, NV, TX, UT