



Dental Amalgam - Information for Parents or Carers of Patients Under 15 Years Old

What is dental amalgam?

Dental amalgam is a silver coloured material commonly used to fill decayed teeth. Amalgam is a mixture of metals including mercury and is a strong and long-lasting filling material.

Dental amalgam fillings have been used for more than 150 years with no evidence of causing any harm to health, whether in adults or children.

Is Dental Amalgam Safe?

Yes, dental amalgam fillings have been used for more than 150 years. Scientific Evidence has repeatedly shown that amalgam fillings do not cause any harm to health.

What is the concern with Dental Amalgam?

The concern with dental amalgam is environmental. New regulations in the European Union (EU) restricting the use of mercury came into force in 2018. These restrictions on the use of dental amalgam aim to help reduce environmental mercury pollution and are **not a result of any safety concerns about amalgam fillings** for dental patients.

Why have I been given this information?

Since your child is under 15 years of age, the new regulations apply to them, as due to these new regulations, dental amalgam is no longer allowed for the treatment of children under 15 years old, unless the dentist thinks that it is necessary.

How can I decrease the use of Dental Amalgam?

The best way to avoid the need for amalgam fillings is to prevent tooth decay in the first place. To do this:

- Ensure that toothbrushing is carried out twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Ensure that healthy eating advice especially with regards to sugars is followed.
- Treatments such as fluoride varnish and sealants can be used to prevent or stop decay in the early stages.
- If your child needs a filling, there are materials other than dental amalgam that your dentist can use in most cases. These include tooth-coloured fillings or preformed (stainless steel) crowns.

My dentist has advised that my child should have an amalgam filling. Why is this?

It is generally agreed that in some situations dental amalgam is the only suitable material, despite the environmental concerns. Therefore, your dentist might advise that an amalgam filling is necessary for your child and will explain the reasons for this.

What about the amalgam fillings my child already has?

There is no evidence to suggest that existing amalgam fillings are harmful to the health of dental patients. Unless your child's amalgam fillings are broken or there is further decay, **there is no need to have them removed or replaced.**

If you would like further information or have any concerns, please speak to your child's dentist.

This leaflet has been developed by the Health Amalgam Advisory Committee. This and other patient information is available on the Department of Health Regulation website.