

# Dental Amalgam Fillings: A Fact Sheet

## Introduction

- ✓ Dental amalgam is the most common tooth filling material used by dentists today. It is known as a “silver filling” and is used to fill holes in teeth caused by dental decay (cavities).
- ✓ Studies show very few health effects from the low amounts of mercury in dental amalgam fillings.
- ✓ Mercury can be found in food, water and air. There is always a very low level of mercury present in the human body. The daily dosage of mercury from these sources is more than the amount released from dental amalgam fillings.

## Background: The history of dental amalgams

- ✓ One of the components of dental amalgam is mercury (in addition to silver, tin, copper and sometimes zinc). All of these components combine to form a bond that is hard, stable and durable, which is why it is used to fill teeth. Mercury is necessary because it triggers the chemical reaction that hardens the filling once it is placed in the tooth.
- ✓ More than 100 million Americans have fillings made of amalgam placed in their teeth each year in the United States because they are safe, affordable and durable. Dentists have been using amalgam safely for more than 150 years.
- ✓ Under the pressure of daily chewing and grinding, very small amounts of mercury may be released. There is no scientific evidence that this tiny amount of mercury vapor has any adverse health effects.
- ✓ Out of the billions of people with dental amalgams there have only been 50 reported cases of allergy to mercury since 1906, which is a very small amount considering there are more than 100 million amalgam fillings placed each year.
- ✓ The American Dental Association (ADA) believes that the removal of amalgam fillings from non-allergic patients is improper and unethical.
- ✓ Amalgam has allowed millions of people to keep their own teeth and maintain good oral health.

## For More Information

For further information please call one of the numbers listed below or visit one of the listed web sites:

- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Oral, Rural, and Primary Care Section at (303) 692-2470
- Colorado Dental Association at 303-740-6900
- University of Colorado School of Dentistry, Department of Restorative Dentistry at (303) 315-8507
- ✓ [www.ada.org/prof/pubs/daily/0202/0219amal.html](http://www.ada.org/prof/pubs/daily/0202/0219amal.html)
- ✓ [www.cds.org/public/factsheet\\_amalgam.htm](http://www.cds.org/public/factsheet_amalgam.htm)
- ✓ [www.deltadentalca.org/health/fillings.html](http://www.deltadentalca.org/health/fillings.html)
- ✓ [www.fda.gov/bbs/topic/consumer/cono266g.html](http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topic/consumer/cono266g.html)
- ✓ [www.fda.gov/cdrh/consumer/amalgams.html](http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/consumer/amalgams.html)
- ✓ [www.nidcr.nih.gov](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov)
- ✓ [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)
- ✓ [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)