

Dental fillings: a threat to your health or harmless?

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According to the American Dental Association, dentists have been using amalgam fillings for over a century. “ It’s the least expensive type of filling, used in roughly a third of procedures to replace tooth decay” (Southall 1). The amalgam fillings often called “ silver” fillings consist of a mixture of metals: Fifty percent liquid mercury and a fifty percent mixture of silver, tin, and copper (Magner 1). In the 1970’s some of the first claims were made that the mercury in amalgam fillings could be responsible for many health problems (Magner 1).

Since then, scientific studies and research on amalgam fillings have unveiled a wide range of health problems that come from mercury exposure, and groups are urging the F. D. A. to ban these so called “ silver” fillings. However, the F. D. A. still deems amalgam fillings safe for adults and children over six, leaving the general public with the question, “ Do amalgam fillings pose a significant threat to human health? ” Since the F. D. A. deemed amalgam fillings safe for the public, many people hold the view that the mercury used in dental fillings is safe and poses no threat to human health. The F. D. A. has based its decision, to allow dentists to use amalgam fillings, on scientific evidence that proved there were no harmful effects from amalgam fillings. In Sharon Begley’s informative article “ Mercury Tooth Fillings: F. D. A. Does an About Face,” she states in 2006 the Journal of the American Medical Association had come to a conclusion on the threats of amalgam fillings. The conclusion: after following just over 1, 000 kids for five years in one study and seven years in the other, the scientists found no evidence of harmful effects” (1).

In Begley's article one of the science teams stated that, "No statistically significant differences were found between children in the amalgam and composite groups. In I. Q. , in memory abilities, in visuomotor. In all, there were no statistically significant differences in adverse neuropsychological... effects observed" (1). Begley's article offered strong scientific evidence supporting the FDA's decision to uphold the use of amalgam fillings in America. Ashley Southall put forth an article in 2009 noting mercury levels safe in fillings. Southall mentions that the F. D. A. had stated, "while elemental mercury has been associated with adverse health effects at high exposures, the levels released by dental amalgam fillings are not high enough to cause harm in patients" (1). Although Southall did use some statements from the F. D. A. , she failed to use specific scientific studies to support the F. D. A. s claim of amalgam fillings being safe which made her article weak. Not only is there scientific evidence that amalgam fillings aren't dangerous, there is also "the basic fact of chemistry: The mercury in dental amalgam chemically binds to other elements; the result is a substance that is hard, stable, and safe" (Magner 5). People who hold the view that the mercury used in dental fillings poses no threat are supporting their views with more scientific studies. According to Lois Magner some of the most compelling data has come from studies on dentists.

Magner states, "studies have shown that dentists do tend to have higher levels of mercury in the urine than does the general population. Yet dentists still have no greater risk of illness or death. In other words, even dentists' above-average mercury levels do not seem to be high enough to cause harm" (5). Magner fears that even though the risk posed by the mercury in

amalgam fillings is minimal to none and even though it is cost effective, it can still be banned on unfounded fears (7).

On the contrary, many hold the viewpoint that the mercury in amalgam fillings is dangerous and has adverse health effects. Supporters of this view may have based their decision of scientific evidence as well. In an article put forth by the Physicians for Social Responsibility it stated, "autopsy results have shown that methylmercury causes nerve cell death and scarring in selected areas of the brain" (2). Not only is the brain affected from methylmercury so is the cardiovascular system.

There have been links between methylmercury and high blood pressure, heart-rate abnormalities, and heart disease (Physicians 2). The Physicians also noted that "while several organ systems in the body can be affected by methylmercury, the major target system is the central nervous system, and the most vulnerable life stage is fetal" (1). There was also a study put forth by the Centers for Disease Control that found nearly 8% of women of childbearing ages had mercury levels too high to be considered safe for a fetus (Physicians 3).

This could mean millions of children and women are at risk for adverse health effects associated with mercury poisoning. The article "Mercury Contamination Poses a Serious Health Threat", offers strong scientific evidence supporting the claim of adverse health effects from mercury exposure, and could definitely change one's mind on the decision to keep or remove their amalgam fillings. I have come to the conclusion that amalgam fillings may be dangerous in large quantities. If I had the means to remove my amalgam fillings safely I would. I have watched many people's

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testimonies on youtube. com supporting the claim that their amalgam fillings were the cause of several adverse health effects, and that once the fillings were removed many cancers and disease left the body. Many of these people were taking a holistic approach to health and had had their amalgam fillings removed in conjunction with a lifestyle freeing the body of intoxicants. Although I have found much evidence supporting the claim that amalgam fillings aren't a threat to my health, I still fear they may be.

A judge accused the FDA of dragging its feet when it came to the regulations of amalgam fillings (Begley 1), and the F. D. A. as classified amalgam fillings as a Class II or " moderate risk," medical device (Southall 1). Still more research and scientific evidence in America needs to be put forth in order for the F. D. A. to put strict regulations on the use of mercury in fillings. I have also found in my research that working in the dental field may also be dangerous because of the high levels of mercury. Unfortunately these are not from credible sources. In this great country of Amercia we have the Freedom of the Press and it just sickens me that conglomerates have control of about two-thirds of our newspapers and can control what is printed (Burns 2).

In order to get the truth on whether or not amalgam fillings can cause adverse health effects, one must evaluate why the F. D. A. is motivated to deem amalgam fillings safe, when so many individuals have come forth proving the contrary. Who pays the F. D. A. after all? Is a question I still need to answer myself. As for now the American Dental Association isn't going to get rid of an affordable practical solution to tooth decay just because some individuals think their health issues were related to their amalgam fillings.

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