

### ***Patient Information on Dental Amalgam***

In the last few years there has been media interest in the safety of dental amalgam. Irish dentists, whose standards of care are extremely high, continue to keep abreast of scientific developments worldwide. Their professional priority is their patient. Also, they must ensure the safety of their staff and themselves.

#### ***Is Amalgam Safe?***

Dental amalgam has been used on patients for 150 years. All available research world-wide indicates that amalgam is not harmful to health. This view is endorsed by:

- World Health Organisation
- International Dental Federation
- International Association for Dental Research
- US Department of Health & Human Services
- American Dental Association
- British Dental Association
- Swedish Medical Research Centre
- Canadian Dental Association

#### ***Would Dentists Stop Using Amalgam if it was shown to be Hazard to Health?***

Yes. It would be morally and ethically wrong for dentists to use any product that was a hazard. Also, dentists and their employees are concerned about their own health. Research into the health of dental workers is useful because they are exposed to dental amalgam all day every day and therefore would be expected to experience problems before anyone else. Studies on dental workers show that dental amalgam does not cause physical or mental disease.

#### ***Why is there Continuing Research if Dental Amalgam is believed to be Safe?***

Dental research is ongoing over a whole range of products and diseases. Whereas it is possible to prove that a product is unsafe or requires special precautions, it is often impossible to prove it is safe. However, with 150 years of dental amalgam use world-wide, and much research and studies by physicians, toxicologists and other scientists, there are no known direct link between dental amalgam use and disease.

#### ***Is Dental Amalgam the Only Source of Mercury?***

No. Your diet is the major source of mercury – ie., fish.

#### ***What do the World Scientists Say?***

No Government or reputable scientific, medical or dental body anywhere in the world, accepts on any present published evidence, that dental amalgam is a hazard to health. Neither the World Health Organisation, nor any other scientific body could

find any connection between health problems and dental amalgam use.

***Is the use of Dental Amalgam Increasing?***

No. Dental health is improving and today fewer teeth need fillings and the number of dental amalgam restorations is decreasing. In addition, cavities are smaller and alternative types of filling material may be more suitable in some cases. Dental amalgam fillings are normally reserved for the larger type of restorations involving the chewing surfaces of the teeth.

***How Good are the Alternatives to Dental Amalgam?***

In many respects dental amalgam is the ideal material. As well as being durable with good wear resistance, it expands and contracts with changes in temperature at a similar rate to natural teeth, eg., eating an ice cream or drinking hot tea or coffee. With the exception of much more expensive gold restorations, dental amalgam can outperform the alternative where there is a lot of wear and tear on the teeth. Fillings need to last a long time as frequent replacements weaken the remaining tooth structure which could then require much more complicated and costly restorations.

***I would still prefer not to have Amalgam Fillings!***

If your current fillings are clinically sound then your dentist will probably not recommend removing them. If you still want to have them removed, you must discuss this with your dentist.

***How would you sum up the Scientific Evidence?***

There is no accepted scientific evidence for your dentist to stop using dental amalgam fillings or to recommend their replacement.

Tooth decay is preventable – evidence of this statement is unequivocal.

Tooth Decay (and therefore Fillings) will be avoided by following this simple advice

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- 1) Between meals intake of food containing sugar must be avoided
- 2) No food should be consumed after late night tooth brushing
- 3) Seek further advice from your local family dentist at the time of your regular check-up.