

Talking with your patients about **Dental Amalgam**

This fact sheet is provided as a guide of talking points for your reference. It is important to remind patients that their health is your first priority.

- ▶ There is a lot of confusing information that continues to be circulated about dental amalgam—silver-colored dental filling material. The most important things to know are that amalgam is a safe, effective material that dentists have used to restore decayed teeth in millions of Americans, and that it is just one of your options if you need a dental filling.
- ▶ I would like you to understand that amalgam is not mercury; rather amalgam is an alloy. It is made by combining silver, copper, tin and zinc with mercury. The alloy has entirely different properties than mercury. So whether you're considering its effect on the body or on the environment, you cannot compare exposure to amalgam to exposure to an equivalent amount of mercury.
- ▶ Because mercury is a principal ingredient, people may be concerned about how amalgam might affect their health or the environment. This concern is unfounded. Just as hydrogen (an explosive gas) combines with oxygen to form water, the mercury in dental amalgam combines with the other metals to form a stable alloy.
- ▶ For your treatment options, I will give you the best advice that I can, taking into account your individual needs—size and location of cavity, health history, aesthetic concerns and cost. Ultimately, it's your choice as to what type of filling you get.
- ▶ A dentist who recommends removal of serviceable amalgam from a non-allergic patient claiming that doing so will remove toxic substances or cure some non-dental disease is acting unethically. This is misleading the patient about the therapeutic value of the proposed treatment.
- ▶ My foremost priority as a dentist is your health and safety. I base my treatment recommendations on the best-available scientific information and my own clinical experience. And science and my experience tell me that amalgam, like all other dental filling materials currently in use, is safe and effective.

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