

My research is about the dental fillings. Every so often in the news is about mercury and the toxicity of it. I have amalgam fillings or sometimes called silver fillings. What are the risks and alternatives for dental fillings?

There are amalgam, composite, glass ionomer, resin ionomer, porcelain and gold alloy fillings to choose, according to the American Dental Association ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)). Each type has its own pros and cons. 'When something foreign is put into your body, there is always the chance of side effects, such as an allergy. For every filling material, there are a few people who may be allergic to it. However, this is very rare.'[www.cda-adc.ca](http://www.cda-adc.ca)).

The **Amalgam or silver fillings** are basically the same material today as they were when they were first introduced nearly two hundred years ago. 'They all contain Mercury as the primary metal, with silver as their other major component, followed by a mixture of tin, nickel, copper, and other metals.' ([www.advanceddentalartsnw.com](http://www.advanceddentalartsnw.com)). These fillings are inexpensive and durable, strong to withstand the forces of chewing and able to be done in one visit.

The disadvantages of the Amalgam are: removal of some healthy tooth, it can darken over time as it corrodes, stain teeth, more sensitive to hot and cold. 'While agencies like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have not found evidence of harm from dental amalgam, there some who have raised concerns about the very low levels of mercury vapor released by amalgam.' ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)). There has been studies done about the mercury in amalgam, they have been inconclusive to any dangers. Mercury by itself is toxic. 'In an agreement to settle a lawsuit filed by the group Moms Against Mercury the FDA agreed in June 2008 to change their website to acknowledge the possible dangers associated with the amalgam fillings. The FDA now admits that mercury vapor is released during chewing on an amalgam filling and also when the silver fillings are placed and removed from the teeth.' ([www.about.com/dentalcareJune](http://www.about.com/dentalcareJune) 10, 2008). Another disadvantage this material is that it is prone to expansion and contraction and more likely to cause your tooth to crack. 'This fluctuation also creates open spaces between the filing and the tooth that allows food and bacteria to become trapped, enabling cavities to form.' ([www.about.com/dentalcareMay30,2012](http://www.about.com/dentalcareMay302012)).

**Composite fillings** or resin is a mixture of 'acrylic resin and powdered glass-like particles that produce a tooth-color filling.' ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)). These fillings are good for visible areas in the mouth, are done in one appointment and good durability in small to mid-size restorations. Composite do not corrode and permit preservation of much of the tooth.

The disadvantages of composite fillings are that breakage is more easily than metal and are more expensive than amalgam. They are not as dependable and decay is more of a problem.

**Glass Ionomer fillings** are made of a mixture of acrylic acids with fine glass powders that are used to fill cavities, particularly those on the surfaces of the teeth. Minimal amount of tooth structure is removed and usually completed in one visit. Tooth color looks more natural and can contain fluoride that may help further decay. These fillings are placed where you do not bite down hard. This filling bonds chemically with the tooth to prevent further decay.

This disadvantages are of this filling are not as strong as others and may not last as long. They are not good for large fillings. Glass ionomer fillings are not recommended for biting surfaces. The cost is similar to composite resin fillings.

**Resin Ionomer fillings** are made from glass filler with acrylic acids and acrylic resins. These are more translucent than glass ionomer and also may contain fluoride to help to prevent decay. They harden with a blue light in the dentist office in one visit; also, good for small fillings and produce low tooth sensitivity.

The cons of resin fillings are they wear faster than composite and amalgam and not recommended for biting surfaces in adult teeth. These may be expensive.

**Porcelain** fillings/crowns are composed of porcelain, ceramic or glass-like fillings and crowns. They are the same color of the natural teeth and will last a long time. Custom fitted to the tooth, very durable and does not cause tooth sensitivity.

Porcelain is expensive and 2 or 3 visits at the dentist office. It is strong enough to wear down opposing teeth and requires removal of the health tooth.

**Gold fillings** are strong, tarnish resistant and resistant to further decay. The metal is extra durable. They are used for crowns and bridges.

The disadvantages of gold fillings are they are expensive (up to 10 times more than amalgam) and conducts heat and cold initially. They will corrode amalgam fillings when placed next to them and they are not natural looking. It will take more than one visit.

So, after doing research, there are other alternatives out there. I feel each individual to look into these alternatives and find what feels right for them. My sensitivities will be different from someone else's. Another factor is cost, whether one has insurance or not, insurances may not cover certain type of fillings. Now, I realize the risks that are there.

References:

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com) dental care – Different Types of Fillings by Lora Dodge May 30, 2012

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com) dental care-FDA admit Silver Dental Fillings May Not Be Safe by Tammy Davenport 6- 10-2008

[www.oralb.com](http://www.oralb.com) Types of Fillings

[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) Dental Fillings Facts

[www.sharecare.com](http://www.sharecare.com) Tooth Problems? Brush Up On the Latest Dental-Filling Options

[www.advanceddentalartsnw.com](http://www.advanceddentalartsnw.com) The Pros and Cons of Mercury-Silver Dental Fillings

[www.cda-adc.ca](http://www.cda-adc.ca) The Choices of Dental Filling Materials