

ARE SILVER FILLINGS DANGEROUS?

A recent article in the Kalispell Interlake stated, the "[FDA issues warning on silver fillings](#)". I personally feel it is just one more shock article to upset people that will increase sales of anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medication, and lead to higher dental costs to replace otherwise good, serviceable fillings. Before anyone rushes in to have all of their silver fillings removed here are some facts, risks and benefits, and a good look at the issue.

True, there is some mercury in silver fillings to create a reaction with the silver metal components to make it start to harden within minutes. It has documented use since 659 AD, but has been most popular for fillings over the past 150 years. The reaction binds metal components together and seals the mercury into the mix; an amalgam is a "mixture of mercury with at least one other metal". There is no liquid mercury in the mouth. There is a very small amount of mercury vapor released when chewing the next couple of days, but is it a harmful amount? Many large studies have shown the amount of mercury vapor is insignificant. Each patient is warned not to chew on a new metal filling the day it is placed as it may break while it is hardening. If anyone is exposed to mercury vapor often it is the dentist and assistants that work with it each day, and they do not have problems associated with it.

Whether a person has a silver filling in all of their teeth or none, the mercury levels in cadavers have not been shown to be related to fillings. Mercury from polluted air and seafood has been well-known to contribute to our mercury levels. Pregnant women have long been warned about consumption of certain fish, including Flathead Lake trout. www.ewg.org/safefishlist has good information on fish. It has been shown there is more mercury in one tuna fish sandwich than 5 new silver fillings.

The recent article stated, "The warning is not aimed at the general population". Each person has choices in dental fillings if they are paying for their care. If you are concerned, have new fillings placed using bonded non-mercury tooth-colored resin fillings. I highly advise against replacing silver fillings because of the mercury scare, and so does the FDA, American Dental Association, American Medical Association, Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, MS society, Diabetes Foundation, Alzheimer society, and all other medical societies. Unless one needs to replace a silver filling the old filling is doing no harm; the tooth can be harmed by unnecessary removal of fillings which can lead to fractures, root canals, crowns, and/or loss.

If a silver filling is failing, is damaging your tooth, or you do not like the gray-black color, those are good reasons to replace it. There is also a scare about patients being exposed to mercury vapor when the fillings are removed. Again, the dentist and assistants exposed to it each day would be most apt to have exposure problems, and it is not seen. High speed suction removes most vapor and particulates.

I have not used silver mercury fillings for many years because I do not like having mercury in my office or working with it and because I believe bonded resin fillings are superior and are a better filling material for my patients at this time. I would not choose a silver filling for myself or have any reason to

recommend silver fillings to my patients, but they have their place and help populations that cannot afford, or do not desire the best dentistry has to offer at this time. Ask your dentist how they feel about amalgam fillings.