

DENTAL FILLINGS, CROWNS (CAPS) AND BRIDGES

The chart following this introduction was developed to help dentists explain to their patients the relative advantages and disadvantages of various dental materials used in dental fillings, crowns (caps) and bridges. The chart, based on current (2004) science, is a simple overview of dental restorative materials and is not intended to be comprehensive. In addition, the attributes of a particular restorative material will vary from case to case depending on many factors.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the development of tooth colored dental materials. The improvement in these materials, however, has not eliminated the value of traditional restorative materials such as gold and dental amalgam. The strength and durability of gold and dental amalgam remain very useful in the back of the mouth where heavy chewing forces must be resisted. In fact, dental amalgam is still the most commonly used filling material. It is

the most thoroughly researched and tested. It is durable, easy to use and relatively inexpensive in comparison to other materials.

Concern exists about mercury contained in dental amalgam, especially for use in children under age six. Research has answered questions about the safety of dental amalgam to the satisfaction of the major U.S. and international scientific and health bodies, including the National Institute of Health, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the World Health Organization. The research shows that the mercury in dental amalgam is bound to other materials, rendering it safe for use as a dental filling regardless of the patient's age.

Should you have any questions, your dentist will be happy to discuss

them with you. You may also wish to review the "Consumer Update: Dental Amalgam" published on March 18, 2002 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), available on the FDA web site, as well as the "Review and Analysis of the Literature on the Potential Adverse Health Effects of Dental Amalgam."

Ronald J. Hrinda, DMD, President
NH Board of Dental Examiners

Consultants:

Margaret Snow, DMD
Dept. of Health & Human Services

James M. Ferraiolo, DMD
Past President
NH Dental Society