



## Patient Information Leaflet

# Amalgam fillings

Cork University Dental  
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain amalgam fillings and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further explanation, please ask us.

### **Why do I need an amalgam filling?**

Amalgam fillings are used to fill cavities caused by decay and are also used as a core filling material under crowns and bridges.

### **What is involved in having an amalgam filling?**

Local anaesthetic will be administered initially. A rubber sheet known as a rubber dam may be placed over the tooth to keep it dry. The decay or existing leaking filling will be removed using a dental drill. Following this, the amalgam filling material will be packed into the cavity. Once the entire cavity has been filled, the filling will be shaped to fit your bite.

### **What are the risks associated with amalgam fillings?**

Very rarely people can have an allergic reaction to the components of amalgam fillings. This can be seen as white patches on the gum or cheek beside the fillings.

With large amalgam fillings there is a risk that the nerve inside the tooth may die. The tooth may then need root canal treatment or extraction.

The amalgam filling or the tooth surrounding it may break. This would mean that you would need further treatment.

### **Are amalgam fillings safe?**

Amalgam filling material contains small amounts of mercury and concerns about its use have been raised in the media in recent years.

The World Health Organisation, the World Dental Federation, the International Association for Dental Research, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and many more national dental associations, including those of America, Canada, Britain and Ireland have found dental amalgams to be safe for use in patients.

Scientific research supports the continued use of dental amalgam and research continues to be monitored.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients/>