

New and Replacement Fillings that Match the Colour of Teeth!

Metal amalgam or silver fillings are now rarely used. Usually a mixture of silver, tin, zinc, copper and mercury, they are stable when set and is a safe dental material despite unfounded concern over its mercury content. Although they are strong as they are metal based and less costly than white fillings, they don't match the colour of teeth and do not bond to tooth structure, requiring substantial preparation of the tooth for the amalgam to hold.

Tooth-coloured or white fillings are the most common today. Although they are not as strong as amalgam and are more costly, they are a much better match to the properties of natural tooth structure, especially in terms of aesthetics. Less drilling is required than with amalgam fillings because the dentist does not have to shape the tooth as much to hold the filling securely as these materials directly bond to the tooth.



Deep stained groove in premolar tooth sealed with Glass Ionomer for prevention and larger decay in molar tooth restored with Composite Resin

Composite resin is basically plastic reinforced by fine glass particles and give the best aesthetics and smoothness as they can be polished to a high shine. The main concern is that they micro-mechanically bond to tooth structure and hence may shrink during setting, producing gaps between the tooth and the filling. This can lead to further decay in areas where the filling is not making good contact with your tooth. The shrinkage is minimized when your dentist places this type of filling material in thin layers.

Glass ionomer is the newest technology based on calcium and fluoride minerals found in teeth. Although they may not match the colour of teeth as well as composite resin and do not feel as smooth or are as strong, they chemically bond to tooth structure and release fluoride which prevents leakage around the filling and protects the tooth from further decay. They are more gentle to the nerves of the tooth and are advantageous for their therapeutic benefits in cavities close to the nerve.

A filling only covers the defective part of a tooth, making white fillings a conservative procedure to hide small blemishes on the surface of a tooth or between teeth. Besides being good for restoring cavities and replacing old fillings, white filling materials are also great for prevention.



A large gap between the upper front teeth closed with Composite Resin Fillings

Early tooth decay often begins as enamel breakdown and staining in the pits and grooves on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. As tooth decay gets bigger it can break through the pits and grooves of the tooth and enter the deeper dentine part of the tooth. The tooth often becomes dark in colour and a cavity can form in the tooth.

Dentists can prevent early tooth decay becoming a large cavity by giving teeth preventive fillings. When a tooth has deep pits and grooves that shows risk of becoming tooth decay, a small white filling can be placed to cover the pits and grooves of the tooth to protect them from decaying. When decay is larger and a cavity has formed, the decay needs to be removed and the tooth needs to be restored with a large white filling. As this filling becomes worn and damaged over time, it can usually be replaced with another white filling as long as the surrounding tooth structure remains intact. If the surrounding tooth structure breaks or becomes decayed, sometimes another filling replacement cannot be done and the tooth requires a crown to cover and protect its surfaces as there is not enough tooth structure remaining to hold another filling.