

### The move from traditional to tooth-coloured fillings

Traditional filling material, or amalgam, is silvery-grey. It's long lasting and has been used successfully by dentists for many years. Although scientific opinion is that traditional fillings are perfectly safe, some dentists and patients are concerned about their mercury content. Of course, it's sometimes cosmetically unacceptable to have a traditional filling too-particularly in the teeth close to the front of your mouth.

Tooth-coloured fillings have been used for over 50 years and today many dentists and patients prefer them. They can offer an alternative to traditional amalgam in most situations.

### Choosing what's right for you

Because tooth-coloured fillings match the colour of your teeth they are virtually invisible, so they're a good choice if you're concerned about the appearance of your filling. This cosmetic advantage makes them the clear choice for front teeth. They can also be the best choice for small fillings in back teeth because they often mean your dentist doesn't have to remove as much of your tooth to put in the filling.

### What are the disadvantages?

Tooth-coloured filling material is bonded to the teeth with durable adhesives. But they are partly plastic and the plastic element can wear more quickly than the metal in traditional fillings, so your filling might need to be replaced at some time in the future. Tooth coloured filling aren't strong enough for very large gaps.

Because they're plastic, tooth-coloured fillings can discolour. But remember they can be polished or resurfaced quite easily in most cases.

Tooth-coloured fillings can take longer to do and your dentist will need to make sure that no moisture gets into the filling as it's being filled.

Some people experience sensitivity after a tooth-coloured filling. Ask your dentist if there is a particular risk for you.

A tooth-coloured filling will cost more than the equivalent traditional filling.

### After your filling

Your dentist will discuss any possible complications with you, although it's not always possible to predict whether a filling will be successful. If further treatment is necessary, it might mean using a different material, such as creating a crown for porcelain or metal. Occasionally, root canal treatment might be necessary if the tooth doesn't settle well after a filling.