



Children's Hospital Boston

Department of Dentistry

Children's Hospital, Boston

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www.childrenshospital.org/dentistry



**HARVARD SCHOOL
OF DENTAL MEDICINE**

Division of Pediatric Dentistry

Department of Oral and Developmental Biology

Restorative Materials for Posterior (Back) Teeth

There is much confusion and misinformation amongst the public about the use of silver (amalgam) versus the “newer” white or plastic (resin composite) fillings. The issue is complex, but this handout is an attempt to inform you of these issues and our philosophy.

Silver fillings have been used very successfully in dentistry for well over a century. However, over the past decade several claims have been aired to the public by the media that this type of filling can cause serious systemic medical conditions. These claims are not scientifically based. In contrast, there are numerous studies and position statements supporting both efficacy and safety of silver fillings from governmental (FDA) scientific (National Council Against Health Fraud) and dental organizations (ADA). We believe that this material has value and we will continue to recommend its use in situations where we feel it is superior.

Over the past ½ century various types of plastic resin-based materials were introduced into dentistry. These materials are now widely used for:

- Restoring damaged or decayed front teeth where cosmetics is a major concern,
- Application of sealants,
- Bonding of orthodontic braces, as well as in many other cases.

More recently, these materials have been improved in their strength and durability and now can be used selectively on restoring back teeth. With time, the characteristics of plastic materials will continue to improve which may allow us to totally eliminate the use of silver for restoring back teeth.

If we find decay upon examining your child, we may offer you a choice of restorative materials.

There may be an esthetic advantage to the plastic material, though silver may be more durable.

Please be aware that the procedure for placing a plastic filling is technically more complex, requires



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more time and is thus more costly than a silver filling. Also you should be aware that insurance carriers may not reimburse us totally for these higher fees and you may be responsible for the difference between our fee and their reimbursement.

If you have questions, please feel free to ask your provider or a member of our billing department upon your next visit to our department.