

Mouth Matters

Dorion on Dentistry

Choose Your Restoration



Next time you need a filling placed, consider the various options available to you. There was once a time when you had very little choice since the materials were limited to silver (amalgam) or gold. Today, however, we have numerous alternatives to these metal restorations.

Two categories of restoration exist: direct and indirect. Direct restorations include silver amalgam and composite resin fillings. They are packed directly into the prepared tooth and require only one appointment to place. Silver fillings are gradually becoming less popular for a number of reasons. For one, silver fillings just ain't pretty! This is especially true when they age and the metal begins to tarnish. There is also controversy about the safety of amalgam because it contains mercury which leaks out in small amounts over time. In fact, there are some dentists who no longer use this material at all. Most dentists do not recommend the removal of existing silver fillings as long as they are otherwise sound. However, you do have the option of choosing a different material when it comes time to replace your old fillings.

Direct composite resin fillings are much more esthetic because they match the color of your teeth. They permit more conservative tooth preparation (less drilling) because they bond to the tooth, unlike amalgam which depends on undercuts for mechanical retention. The material for composite fillings is more costly. They also require more time and skill to place and are therefore somewhat more expensive than amalgam.

Indirect restorations are fabricated outside the mouth and require at least two appointments. At the first appointment the tooth is prepared

and a mold is taken from which a stone replica of the tooth is made. The restoration is then precisely fabricated in a laboratory using the stone model. It is then permanently cemented to the tooth at the second appointment. A temporary restoration protects the tooth between these two appointments. Included in this category are crowns, inlays, onlays and veneers. These high quality, durable restorations can be made out of gold, porcelain, or processed resin. The porcelain and resin type restorations are very natural looking and can be matched to the color and shape

of your tooth. We can use veneers or crowns to improve the color of your teeth if staining or discoloration is a problem. And, for minor misalignment, shape or spacing problems in front teeth we can often use them to "instantly" improve your smile. In situations where there is significant loss of tooth structure from decay, fractures, or old fillings, an indirect restoration is often the best option available. In fact, some experts claim that these are the best restorations for all but the smallest of cavities.

Remember that you have many excellent options to choose from besides silver amalgam. So next time you need a restoration, talk to your dentist about what materials and methods are most appropriate for you because . . . your "Mouth Matters"!

Yours for better dental health,

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