



# Helping Hands

Jennifer K. Hargleroad, DDS, MS

2105 Bighorn Road, Unit 202

Fort Collins, CO 80525

(970) 493-2254

## **WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN AMALGAM FILLING AND A COMPOSITE FILLING?**

Amalgam fillings have been used in dentistry for more than 150 years. Amalgam fillings are silver in color and are made up of a number of different metal materials, including silver, tin, copper, and zinc. These metals originate in a powder form and are then mixed with mercury that then forms a soft shapeable mixture. When mercury is combined with other materials in dental amalgam, its chemical nature changes so that it is essentially harmless. The amount of mercury released in the mouth from everyday chewing is actually less than what people are exposed to in food, water, and air. Since amalgam fillings are made from metal it is a very strong filling material, which can withstand a lot of pressure and wear. After the amalgam fillings are placed your child may have some sensitivity to hot or cold. This normally goes away after a couple of weeks. Amalgam is a safe, more affordable way to restore posterior cavities.

Composite or resin fillings are tooth colored fillings which are made up of many materials, including quartz, glass, and silica particles. Composite fillings come in a variety of colors that the doctor will match to your child's teeth. The composite material starts out as a sort of play-dough material that is then easily shaped into the tooth needing the filling. The composite material blends in with the tooth so well that it is often very difficult to determine where the filling is on the tooth. After the fillings are placed your child may have some sensitivity to hot or cold. This usually goes away after a couple of weeks. Composite fillings on posterior teeth are more of an aesthetic choice and are often more expensive than the amalgam fillings. Some insurance plans may not cover composite fillings on posterior teeth. Composite fillings are always used for anterior teeth, from the canines and forward.