

What Do I Need to Know About Safe Removal of Mercury Amalgam?

Many patients have heard the term “mercury toxicity” associated with fillings but still have many questions about it: what is it, am I affected by it, and what can be done to remediate it?

Fillings are made of a substance called dental amalgam. This is a mixture of metals, consisting primarily of mercury. Mercury amalgam has been used as a dental filling material around the world since ancient times and in the United States for nearly 200 years.

Mercury toxicity, also called mercury poisoning, is caused by a high level of mercury in the body. The presence of mercury has been shown to cause [a wide range of chronic and acute health problems](#) affecting all major systems in the body; neurological, gastrointestinal, immune, and cardiovascular problems have been attributed to mercury toxicity, as has damage to major organs such as the liver, kidneys, and lungs.

The question of whether or not mercury amalgam fillings contribute to mercury exposure is hotly debated.

- Many dentists believe that amalgam fillings, in use for more than 150 years in this country, are safe and that only a small percentage of the population shows a sensitivity to mercury in fillings. This is the position of the [American Dental Association](#) (ADA); however, the organization also supports ongoing research to assure the safety of all materials used in dental work.
- Many toxicologists associate great risk with the use of mercury amalgam fillings. One researcher, Andrew Cutler, has argued that “millions of people are being poisoned

by mercury compounds the medical profession is exposing them to.”

Even among the doctors and researchers who agree that the use of mercury amalgam is problematic, there is debate about whether the preferred option is safe amalgam removal or leaving existing amalgam in place. Among the latter, common arguments against the procedure include:

- All the mercury has already leaked out.
- Additional tooth structure will be lost by removing existing dental work.
- The patient will be exposed to toxic levels of mercury vapor being released as the fillings are drilled out.

There are [risks associated with removal of mercury amalgam fillings](#), ranging from damage to teeth to neurological, immunological, detoxification, digestive, and endocrine disorders. The very act of amalgam removal can increase mercury exposure to both patient and dental staff. Because of this possibility, dentists who specialize in this practice must receive training in safe mercury removal.

Current standards for dental education do not include instruction for safe amalgam removal. To receive training in proper removal of amalgam fillings (to protect patient and staff from mercury vapor), dentists receive training from any of several postgraduate institutions, including the Holistic Dental Association and the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology.

Governmental entities have issued certain guidelines regarding the use and discarding of mercury in dental facilities. For example, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection operates the [Dental Amalgam Program](#), which contributes to significant reductions in the discharge of mercury into the environment. Additionally, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issues [compliance standards for medical](#)

[and dental offices](#) regarding the use of mercury; however, OSHA standards regulate the protection of dental staff but not patients.

Our next article details the [symptoms of mercury toxicity](#) and how mercury is introduced into the body.

The comprehensive protocols established by [The Center for Systemic Dentistry](#) ensure a thorough process for safe amalgam removal. Located in [Berkeley Heights, New Jersey](#), we are committed to being the state's leading dental practice that focuses on holistic, healing-focused dentistry. [Dr. Philip Memoli](#) is ready to help you recover your health so you can begin to lead a life free of mercury toxicity.

The Center for Systemic Dentistry will work with you to determine the best course of treatment to safely remove your existing mercury amalgam. Call us today at (908) 464-9144 or contact us via our [online contact form](#).

Read more about safe amalgam removal at <http://www.holisticdentistrynj.com/our-services/safe-mercury/>.

Taking Your First Steps Toward Safe, Comprehensive Amalgam Removal

At [The Center for Systemic Dentistry](#), we employ a state-of-the-art protocol for safe removal of mercury amalgam. Our protocol offers maximum health protection, identifying and minimizing the risk of pain or sensitivity.

The first step for a new patient is a comprehensive exam,

which includes a complete dental examination, a systemic assessment, and a discussion of health goals. The examination begins with an assessment of the patient's exposure to mercury amalgam and to other metals in existing fillings, crowns, braces, implants and bridges. A structural exam of teeth determines if they are strong or weak, which in turn determines the required strength of the replacement fillings. A pulpal exam gauges whether the nerves are healthy or suffering from inflammation, infection, or degeneration. The periodontal exam evaluates whether or not gum tissue is healthy and looks for signs of bone loss. A functional examination checks occlusion (bite) and the muscles of the jaw and jaw joint; muscle spasm in this area has a significant stress effect on teeth. Finally, dental radiographs (analog x-rays) are taken, and an acupuncture meridian to tooth association is performed.

The comprehensive exam and the patient's overall health status assist our dentists in determining if the patient is at risk of systemic reaction in the [immune, detoxification, or elimination systems](#).

The next step in [the treatment plan](#) is the actual removal of old mercury amalgams and replacement with new, mercury-free amalgam. Our dentists select a restoration type and material for each affected tooth, based on the results of the comprehensive exam. There are four types of restorations:

- *Type I: Direct Restoration.* For a patient with good dental health and a strong tooth, restoration is made in one visit with a direct filling material.
- *Type II: Inlay Restoration.* A tooth that is mostly sound may still require an inlay to restore structural strength.
- *Type III: Onlay Restoration.* A mostly sound tooth with a chewing surface (cusp) that requires restoration.
- *Type IV: Crown Restoration.* For a structurally weak tooth that has loss of one or more cusps.

Other factors influencing the dentist's selection of restoration type include cracked or fractured teeth, degenerated or susceptible nerves, and teeth grinding.

Mercury-free replacement materials are evaluated for strength, wear, resistance, and esthetics, and different materials are used for different types of restorations. Commonly used materials include composites (made from silica glass and resin), ceramics (three types), and metals (including gold, platinum, palladium). The dentist's exam and evaluation determine the best replacement materials for a given patient and for individual teeth.

Throughout the mercury removal and replacement procedure, patients are protected in multiple ways, including:

- Cooling: Heat from drilling increases the release of mercury vapor; temperature control reduces that.
- Chunking: Minimizing the amount of drilling needed for removal also reduces vapor release.
- High-volume evacuation: Powerful suction to minimize patient exposure to mercury vapor and amalgam particles.
- Rubber dams: Isolates the work area to reduce mercury exposure.
- Cleansing: Thorough cleaning ensures removal of all amalgam particles.
- Pure air: Filtered office air prevents the spread of mercury vapor.

Our dentists keep you informed through every step of your mercury amalgam removal process, including "Dos" and "Don'ts" for the day of treatment, therapeutic scheduling for optimized treatment, nutritional and systemic assessments, a follow-up consultation, and post-treatment therapies as necessary.

A [safe, effective program for removal of mercury amalgam](#) is the first step toward reversing the effects of mercury toxicity in your body. [The Center for Systemic Dentistry](#) in

[Berkeley Heights, New Jersey](#), is committed to being the state's leading dental practice that focuses on holistic, healing-focused dentistry. [Dr. Philip Memoli](#) is ready to help you recover your health so you can begin to lead a life free of mercury toxicity. Call us today at (908) 464-9144 or contact us via our [online contact form](#).

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