

Toxicity

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 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.