

## Fillings and Crowns

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### What are fillings?

To treat a cavity your dentist will remove the decayed portion of the tooth and then "fill" the area on the tooth where the decayed material was removed. Fillings are also used to repair cracked or broken teeth and teeth that have been worn down from misuse.

### What kind of filling material does our office use?

We **do not** use silver or amalgam fillings in our office because of the following reasons:

1. Poor aesthetics -- silver fillings don't match the color of natural teeth.
2. Destruction of more tooth structure -- healthy parts of the tooth must often be removed to make a space large enough to hold the amalgam filling.
3. Discoloration -- amalgam fillings can create a grayish hue to the surrounding tooth structure.
4. Cracks and fractures -- although all teeth expand and contract in the presence of hot and cold liquids, which ultimately can cause the tooth to crack or fracture, amalgam material -- in comparison with other filling materials -- may experience a wider degree of expansion and contraction and lead to a higher incidence of cracks and fractures.
5. Allergic reactions -- a small percentage of people, approximately 1%, are allergic to the mercury present in amalgam restorations.



We **do** use tooth-colored composite fillings for the following reasons:

1. Aesthetics -- the shade/color of the composite fillings can be closely matched to the color of existing teeth. Composites are particularly well suited for use in front teeth or visible parts of teeth.
2. Bonding to tooth structure -- composite fillings actually chemically bond to tooth structure, providing further support.
3. Versatility -- in addition to use as a filling material for decay, composite fillings can also be used to repair chipped, broken, or worn teeth.
4. Tooth-sparing preparation -- sometimes less tooth structure needs to be removed compared with amalgam fillings when removing decay and preparing for the filling.



### When is it necessary to have a crown instead of a filling?

There are many reasons a crown can be more beneficial than a filling. The most usual reason is when a portion of the tooth that has to be replaced, either from decay or fracture, is  $\frac{1}{4}$  or more of the entire size of the tooth. We use massive amounts of pressure to chew our food and the filling materials are not strong enough to withstand chewing forces once they get too large, crowns can. Here are some other reasons a dental crown may be needed:

1. To protect a weak tooth (for instance, from decay) from breaking or to hold together parts of a cracked tooth
2. To restore an already broken tooth or a tooth that has been severely worn down
3. To cover and support a tooth with a large filling when there isn't a lot of tooth left
4. To hold a dental bridge in place
5. To cover misshapen or severely discolored teeth
6. To cover a dental implant

### What kind of crowns do we use in our dental office?

The types of crowns we use here range from gold, porcelain fused to noble metal, zirconia or porcelain crowns. Depending on the location of your tooth and your oral habits, your dentist will determine the type of crown best suited for your needs

