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Amalgam - Silver or White Dental Fillings: You Decide

From [Tammy Davenport](#), former About.com Guide

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Amalgam Fillings - Pros / Cons

AMALGAM FILLINGS

Pros:

- Because of the metal content, amalgam fillings are strong and can withstand [heavy biting pressure](#)¹, and are therefore, used primarily for the back teeth.
- Amalgam filling material is relatively inexpensive.
- Most [dental insurance](#)² companies cover amalgam fillings.

Cons:

- Amalgam filling material contains mercury and other metals. While there have been no conclusive studies relating the mercury in amalgam to any dangers, mercury by itself is very toxic. **Updated June 2008** - [The FDA Admits Silver Dental Fillings May Not Be Safe](#).³
- Some people experience a period of hot and cold sensitivity after having an amalgam filling.
- Amalgam fillings do not harden immediately. Therefore, it is not good to chew on that specific tooth for a couple of hours after the filling is placed.
- More tooth structure is lost because the dentist has to make a bigger preparation.
- Not all dentists do amalgam fillings anymore.

Composite Fillings - Pros/Cons

COMPOSITE FILLINGS

Pros

- The composite filling material contains acrylic and glass particles, no mercury.
- The tooth-colored filling material looks very nice and natural.
- This type of filling material is already hard when you leave the dental office, therefore, you can chew on it whenever you like.
- Less tooth structure is lost because the dentist can make a smaller preparation.

Cons

- The composite filling material is more expensive.
- This type of filling usually takes the dentist a little longer to do.
- Composite fillings can [stain](#)⁴ over a period of time depending on factors such as tea, coffee and tobacco use.
- These fillings do not get whiter if you [bleach](#)⁵ your teeth.
- Composite fillings are strong on back teeth, but not as strong as amalgam.
- Insurance companies will not always pay for composite fillings on back teeth.

Outcome

I prefer the composite fillings for the simple reasons that they look great, and the dentist can save a lot of my tooth structure, which means less drilling! With attributes to both amalgam and composite fillings, the pros and cons can help you decide what type of [filling](#)⁶ is best for you.