



This patient information sheet answers frequently asked questions about having a dental filling. It has been developed to be used in discussion with your dental practitioner.

1. What are dental fillings and why are they needed?

Dental fillings are used to repair worn, damaged or decayed teeth and help the teeth last longer. Both adult and baby teeth can be repaired with fillings.

2. Can baby teeth be filled?

Yes, baby teeth can be filled.

Baby teeth are important for speaking, eating, smiling, and keeping the necessary space for the adult teeth to come through. Some baby teeth can stay in your mouth until 13 years of age or sometimes longer. If the baby teeth show signs of decay, the dental practitioner will provide advice about whether the baby teeth can either be filled, left to fall out or need to be removed.

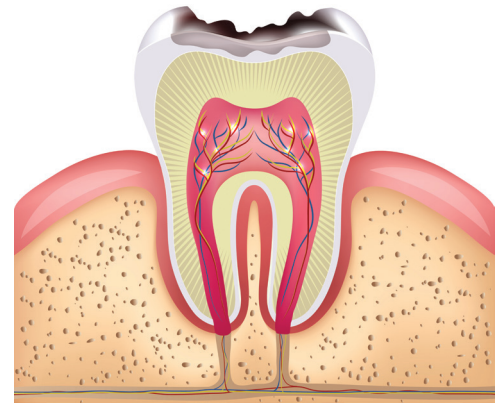


Image 1: Cross section of a tooth with decay

3. What happens during a dental filling?

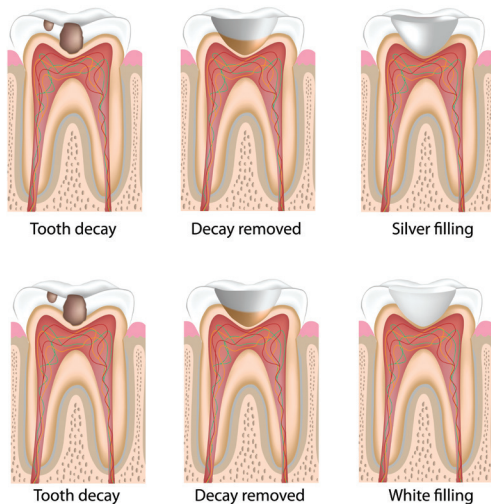


Image 2: Cross section of teeth with dental fillings

Gel may be rubbed onto your gum before an injection of local anaesthetic. The gel makes the injection more comfortable. The local anaesthetic will numb your tooth and areas around your tooth. It is used to prevent or relieve pain, but will not put you to sleep. If the filling is only very small, you may not need to have your tooth numbed.

Where tooth decay is present, the decay is removed with a special drill and other instruments. The remaining hole in the tooth is cleaned, washed and dried, and then filled with a filling material.

The filling material is pushed into the space, restoring the tooth to its original shape. The two main types of filling material used are:

- tooth-coloured (white) fillings; and
- amalgam (silver) fillings.

After your tooth is filled, you will be asked to bite your teeth together to check your new filling feels comfortable when you chew.

4. Tooth coloured (white) fillings

Tooth coloured fillings are used more often than dental amalgam fillings, especially for repairing teeth at the front of the mouth and for filling baby teeth. Some may release a small amount of fluoride, helping in the reduction of further tooth decay around the filling. Tooth coloured fillings are not always the best choice for some tooth repairs and dental amalgam may be used.

5. Dental amalgam (silver) filling

A very small number of all new fillings done in Queensland are amalgam. These fillings are long lasting and durable and are often used to fill the back teeth (molars) as they get a lot of wear and tear. Amalgam fillings are made from a mixture of metals including silver, tin, copper, zinc and mercury.



Image 3: Open mouth showing a silver filling



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5. Dental amalgam (silver) filling (continued)

Amalgam fillings have been widely used for over 150 years. Although a high level of mercury is harmful to human health, the mercury content in silver fillings is very low and not believed to be harmful to the person with the filling. Amalgam fillings are not used in young children and are generally not used for new fillings in pregnant or breastfeeding women and people with kidney disease. The removal of amalgam fillings is also avoided for women who are breastfeeding.

6. What are the specific risks of dental filling?

There are risks and complications with this procedure. They include but are not limited to the following:

Common risks and complications include:

- damage to lips and cheeks: you may bite or rub the numbed area without realising the damage you may be causing; children may need to be supervised until the numbness has worn off
- sensitivity to hot or cold for a few weeks after filling
- sensitivity on biting teeth together for a few days after filling.

Rare risks and complications include:

- an allergic reaction to the filling material:
 - skin rashes and itching could indicate an allergic reaction
- death as a result of this procedure is very rare.

7. What are the risks and complications of a local anaesthetic during a dental procedure?

This procedure will require a local anaesthetic. Please refer to the patient information *Local anaesthetic* available on the informed consent website: www.health.qld.gov.au/consent

8. Who will put in my dental filling?

Oral health care is provided by a team of oral health staff, including dentists, dental specialists, oral health therapists, dental therapists, dental assistants, and dental students.

9. Useful sources of information

Read about mouth care for yourself, babies, infants and children, and teenagers, emergencies and accidents, mouthguards, water fluoridation, and available dental services on the Queensland Health Oral Health website: www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth

The Queensland Health Informed Consent website: www.health.qld.gov.au/consent has information on various dental procedures.



Image 5: No smoking symbol

To quit smoking:

- talk to your dental practitioner, GP, pharmacist, or community health worker
- call Quitline: 13 QUIT (13 78 48)
- refer to the Queensland Government website: www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/atods/smoking/index.html



Image 4: Website address symbol

10. Questions to ask my/my child's dental practitioner

Please ask your dental practitioner if you do not understand any aspect of the information in this patient information sheet or any other information you have been given about your condition, treatment options and proposed procedure.



10. Questions to ask my/my child's dental practitioner *(continued)*

11. Contacts

To find a public local dental clinic, search the Queensland Health Oral Health website “Contact Us” section for a dental service list. The website is:

www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/contact_us.asp



Image 6: Ringing phone symbol

A private dental practitioner (who you may need to pay) may be found on the Australian Dental Association website using the “Find a Dentist” tool. The website is: www.ada.org.au/Find-a-Dentist

Outside of dental clinic/service hours:

- if advice is required, call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84). 13HEALTH provides confidential health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- if an emergency, call 000.

Your local contact details are:



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