

Composite Resins (White fillings)

What is a Composite Resin (White Filling)?

A composite filling is a tooth-colored plastic and glass mixture used to restore decayed teeth. Composites are also used for cosmetic improvements of the smile by changing the color of the teeth or reshaping disfigured teeth.

How is a composite placed?

Following preparation, the dentist places the composite in layers, typically using a light specialized to harden each layer. When the process is finished, the dentist will shape the composite to fit the tooth. The dentist then polishes the composite to prevent staining and early wear.

How Long does it take to place a composite?

Because a composite is more difficult to place than silver fillings, it takes the dentist about 10-20

minutes longer to place. Placement time depends on the size and location of the cavity.

What is the cost?

Prices vary, but composites can cost up to two times the price of a silver filling. Most dental insurance plans cover the cost of the composite up to the price of a silver filling, with the patient paying the difference. As composites continue to improve, insurance companies are more likely to increase their coverage of composites.

What are the advantages of composites?

Aesthetics are the main advantage of composites, since dentists can blend shades to create a color nearly identical to that of the actual tooth. Composites bond to the tooth to support the remaining tooth structure, which helps to prevent breakage and insulate the tooth from excessive temperature changes.

What are the disadvantages?

After receiving a composite, a patient may experience postoperative sensitivity. Also, the shade of the composite can change slightly if the patient drinks tea, coffee or other staining foods. The dentist can put a clear plastic coating over the composite to prevent the color from changing if a patient is particularly concerned about tooth color. Composites tend to wear out sooner than silver fillings in larger cavities, although they hold up as well in small cavities.



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Sources: AGD Vice President E. "Mac" Edington, DDS; "Aesthetic Guidelines for Posterior Composite Restorations," by Paul R. Chalifoux, DDS, The Aesthetic Chronicle, 1996; "Posterior Restorations: Change, Challenge and Controversy,": Shane N. White, BdentSc, MS, MA, California Dental Journal, September 1996