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## DENTAL AMALGAMS

The position of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) is that dental amalgam continues to be considered a safe, extremely useful and necessary part of the restorative materials available to Ontario dentists and their patients. Current evidence does not indicate that dental amalgam is causing illness in the general population. It is the position of RCDSO that the removal of existing sound amalgam fillings in patients who have no indication of adverse health effects attributable to mercury exposure is not justified.

### **The following reflects RCDSO's position:**

1. The medical history of a patient taken before treatment commences should reveal the small percentage of the population that demonstrates hypersensitivity reactions to a component of silver/mercury amalgam.
2. Dental amalgam continues to be a safe, extremely useful and necessary part of the restorative materials available to Ontario dentists and their patients of all ages. Alternative materials may be considered for children if the situation is suitable, and for patients with impaired kidney function. The placement and removal of dental amalgams should be avoided, if possible, during pregnancy.
3. The removal of serviceable amalgam fillings in patients who have no indication of adverse health effects attributable to mercury exposure, such as hypersensitivity or allergy, is not justified.
4. In some patients, there is the potential for a metallic reaction whenever two different metals

come in contact in the oral environment, for example, silver amalgam and dental braces. Appropriate action can be taken by a dentist to avoid and/or correct such an effect in susceptible situations.

5. In placing and removing dental amalgam restorations, dentists should take every precaution to ensure mercury hygiene. The College advises the following regarding the placement and removal of dental amalgam restorations. Ways to minimize patient exposure include:
  - the routine use of a rubber dam;
  - the use of high volume evacuation;
  - frequent irrigation of the mouth with copious quantities of water;
  - no dry cutting when removing old restorations.

As with all dental treatment, the decision to use amalgam fillings must be made with informed consent by the patient, based on a discussion between the dentist and the patient, with the following information provided by the dentist:

- the diagnosis or problem that was noted;

*(continued)*

- the nature and purpose of the proposed treatment;
- the material risks and benefits of the proposed treatment;
- the alternatives available, and their material risks and benefits;
- the cost of the treatment.

RCDSO continues to support the Canadian Dental Association Statement on Dental Amalgam which states:

**Current research on the use of silver dental amalgam supports that amalgam continues to demonstrate clear advantages in many applications over other restorative materials. Significant evidence of patient risk associated with its use has not been demonstrated.**

**Most therapeutic materials involve potential side effects or risks as well as benefits and dentists are trained to be on their guard for these reactions at all times. CDA bases its position on the existing scientific consensus on which government approval is based, and from the range of relevant scientific literature as distinct from individual and sometimes conflicting studies.**

**A common sense approach to the utilization of dental amalgam should be taken whereby patients discuss specific circumstances with their dentist and choose the best restorative material appropriate to a particular application for a particular patient. Dentists want patients to be aware of conclusions from the range of scientific studies on dental amalgam so that the appropriate choice can be made.**

RCDSO supports definitive research of all dental filling materials, including dental amalgam. As mainstream scientific studies are completed, RCDSO will monitor and, where appropriate, re-evaluate its position.

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Portions of this statement originally circulated to all Ontario dentists - November 25, 1996