



# Fillings

Also known as: Dental restoration

## Got a cavity?

You'll need a filling. This common procedure is used to stop decay and protect your teeth.



### Did you know?

Americans ages 20 to 64 have an average of 7 filled teeth!

*National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research*

### What are fillings made of?

The two primary kinds of fillings are **amalgam** (a mixture of metals such as silver, tin, mercury and copper) and **resin composite** (ceramic and plastic compound). Each type has advantages and drawbacks:

#### Amalgam

##### Advantage:

- **Proven.** This type of filling has been around since 1895!
- **Economical.** These fillings cost less than their resin counterparts.
- **Long-lasting.** They generally last 10-15 years, so you don't have to go under the drill as often.

##### Drawback:

- **Noticeable.** Unlike tooth-colored resin, the metal is hard to miss when you open wide.
- **Allergies.** Some people are sensitive to the metals used.

#### Resin composite

##### Advantage:

- **Invisible.** The same color as your teeth, these fillings blend right in.
- **Easy adhesion.** They bond to the surface of your tooth.
- **Preserves maximum amount of tooth.** The material's flexibility means less drilling is required.

##### Drawback:

- **More frequent replacement.** They last about 5-7 years, which is half the lifetime of the average amalgam filling.
- **Takes longer.** The process of placing a resin filling is more involved, taking more of your time and the dentist's.



## Did you know?

You can also get fillings made of porcelain, gold and glass ionomer, although these materials are less likely to be covered under most dental plans.

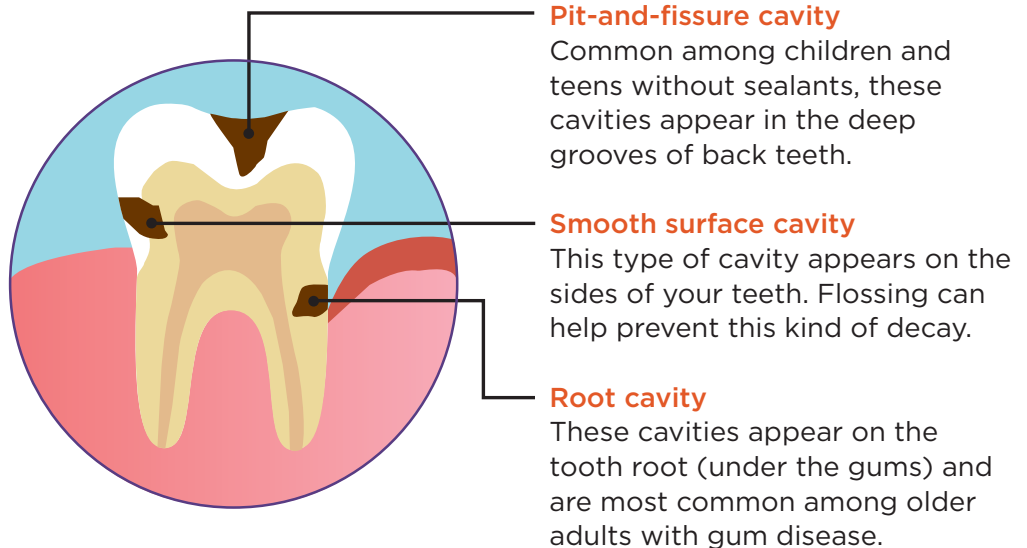
## What happens?

When you get a filling (or a replacement filling), the dentist will use a drill to remove the decay or worn out filling. A vacuum and air/water spray may also be used to keep the area clean. Then, the filling material is placed in the tooth. For resin composite fillings, a blue light is used to harden the material. Finally, the dentist will shape the surface of the filling to fit your bite.

## Does it hurt?

Not since dentists started using anesthesia! Before the procedure, your dentist will numb your tooth and the surrounding area with a gel or injection – sometimes both. As the tooth is being drilled, all you'll feel is the vibration!

## Types of decay



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