

## Our Philosophy on Silver Mercury Fillings

As you are probably aware, there has been a lot of controversy regarding the use of silver mercury fillings, or amalgams, the past few years. The primary reason for this controversy is based on recent research which showed that mercury is released in the mouth while chewing. Other studies have shown that the presence of mercury filling can cause an increase in mercury levels in the brain and other vital organs. This is important because mercury is a very toxic poison and even only, a slight increase in the mercury level in body tissues should warrant a concern.

Even though the presence and release of mercury should be reason enough to discontinue the use of amalgam in dentistry, there are so many other reasons to discontinue its use. These are based on physical properties, strength, and the effect it has on healthy tooth structure. New materials, based on adhesive dentistry, offer all of the advantages of amalgams without the drawbacks, and are certainly, not as ugly and offensive to our patients. With this in mind, our office has decided to discontinue placing silver mercury fillings in our patients' mouths. It has always been my philosophy to only place the type of dentistry in my patients' mouths that I would place in my own, and I refuse to have an amalgam in my own mouth.

Below are just a few, of the many reasons, besides mercury release, that I feel amalgam has become an inferior material and is no longer used in this office:

- 1. Amalgam is ugly!** - No one in their right mind wants a black tooth and that is exactly what amalgam looks like. Not only does it cause the tooth to appear grey from the front, it also stains the tooth so that in the future, more healthy tooth structure may have to be removed to restore the tooth to its more natural appearance. Composite resin fillings disappear into the surrounding dentition and become invisible. Patients are appreciative and excited when we can restore their tooth back to its original appearance.
- 2. Amalgams have lower wear resistance than correctly placed composite resin fillings!** - The key word here is "correctly placed". Early materials and techniques caused composite resins to fail sooner and thus gave these excellent restorations a bad reputation. Studies have shown that new, resin materials wear better than amalgams and should last longer.
- 3. Amalgams break teeth!** - The primary reason there are so many crowns out there is that amalgam fillings expand with time and cause teeth to break. When a tooth breaks it usually results in a fractured cusp which must be restored with an onlay or crown. A bonded composite resin filling actually strengthens the tooth to nearly, its original strength. This could mean that we will see much fewer teeth break in the future and fewer crowns needed. This is a good thing!
- 4. Amalgam fillings leak, causing recurrent decay!** - Because amalgams do not bond to tooth structure, there is a gap between the filling and the tooth. . This gap provides a pathway for bacteria and acids to get into the dentin and cause further decay. Under every amalgam I remove, there is decay! Left untreated, this decay will destroy healthy tooth structure and could result in the need for root canal treatment. Since amalgams stain the tooth dark, early signs of micro-leakage are undetectable. Composite resins actually bond to the tooth structure creating a seal between the tooth and filling. This seal reduces micro-leakage and increases the life of the restoration.

**5. Amalgam is a treatment compromise, and we are a non compromising office!** If patients ask why we don't use amalgam or silver fillings , let them know based on the reasons above. If they become insistent because of price or past experience with silver fillings , tell them "we do not feel comfortable using amalgam in our office. We feel there are better materials available without the potential risks. Since we would not want amalgam fillings placed in our own mouths, we refuse to even offer it to our patients. If you feel so strongly about your desire to have this type of restoration placed, we can give you the name of a competent dentist in the area that still uses these materials, but we will not place amalgams in our office". If they say they want the name of the other dentist; Good Riddance!

## Financial Information

It is our goal to help each of our patients understand the ultimate level of dental health which is achievable for them, and then to help them reach their dental health goals by delivering the very highest quality of dental care. Quality comes from a caring attitude combined with technical know how. It is this special combination that enables each patient to reach the ultimate goal. .a healthy happy, beautiful smile.

### **APPOINTMENT CHANGES**

We ask that you give us two working day's notice (48 hours) in the event you need to change your appointment . This gives us the opportunity to offer your appointment time to another patient in need (dental emergencies). We appreciate this courtesy because the emergency patient waiting to schedule could be you in the future.

A missed appointment is a loss to everyone. We have a nominal fee for "repeated offenses".

### **DENTAL INSURANCE**

As a courtesy to all our patients we continue to provide all necessary paperwork, narratives and X-rays when applicable to help expedite the processing of your claims in order for you to get the reimbursement you deserve..

### **TREATMENT ESTIMATES**

We strive to give you an accurate estimate of the total investment for the recommended treatment. Occasionally additional treatment may be recommended based on a change in your dental condition or on other unforeseen factors. If additional treatment is necessary we will inform you at the time it becomes apparent so that you can make an appropriate decision. Payment for additional services rendered will be due at the time of treatment.

### **PAYMENT OPTIONS**

Payment in full is due at the time of service. For your convenience we accept cash, checks, Visa, Mastercard, Discover, and American Express. For patients who wish to extend payments over a period of time, financing is available from an outside financial firm, subject to credit approval.

**"An Investment In Your Smile Pays Dividends For A Lifetime"**

## FYI (For Your Information)

**INSURANCE:** Your insurance can be a helpful supplement towards your dental investment depending on your dental plan and options. Be assured that we will use all necessary resources to ensure that you receive the maximum benefit under your particular dental plan, We will provide you with the completed claim form, documentation and X-rays if applicable for each dental visit so that it can be mailed promptly to your insurance carrier for expedient processing (at no additional charge to you). Your insurance reimbursement will come directly to you from your insurance carrier usually within fourteen days: the exception would be for extensive treatment that requires review by a dental consultant prior to standard processing. In return, we ask that you take care of your dental investments at the time your services are rendered. We have several payment options available such as Cash, Check, Visa, Master Card, Discover and American Express.

**DENTAL EMERGENCIES:** We hope you never experience one, however, if you or a close relative or friend need our assistance please follow these guidelines. During our regular business hours: please call us as early in the day as possible so that we can fit you into our schedule the same day. For after hours. please call our regular office number (954.938.4599) and our recorded message will provide you with a phone number to reach the doctor on call directly.

**APPOINTMENTS & PROTOCOL:** Our scheduling coordinator will offer you appointment options for your dental needs. Some treatment may require several visits and preplanning. Once these visits are scheduled, we ask that you give at least 48 hours notice in the event you need to change your appointment. This gives us the opportunity to offer your appointment time to a patient \*in need (dental emergencies, etc.). We appreciate this courtesy because the emergency patient waiting to schedule could be you in the future. Please ask us about our priority call list for appointment availability.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Our office is open for your convenience Monday through Thursday. Mondays through thursday from 9am to 4pm and Wednesdays from 10am to 4pm.

**DENTAL STATEMENT:** Certain dental procedures may be phased requiring several visits. This may prompt our computer system to generate a statement for you. In the event that you receive a statement from our office, we ask that you mail your remittance in the envelope we provide upon receipt. Should you ever have a question regarding your account, please call our office.

**CONCERNS:** Should you have any questions or concerns about our office, treatment recommendations and appointments please feel free to contact us. We are committed to making your dental visits with us exceptional, comfortable and pleasant.

## To Our Staff Our Philosophy on Dental Insurance (especially Delta Dental)

As you already know, Preferred Provider Programs (PPO's) have become very popular in dentistry and have created a less than ideal situation for dentistry and the public. PPO's work by creating a lower fee schedule for dentists that sign up for the program who must then only charge that predetermined fee. If patients seek dental care with these PPO dentists, the insurance company will usually pay a high percentage of this fee. If the patient chooses to seek the services of a dentist not signed up with this program, the percentage covered by the insurance program is much less, resulting in a higher out of pocket expense for the patient. The problem with this concept is that in order to function economically, the dentist must cut his/her overhead and increase patient flow in order to keep from actually, losing money with these programs. What this has created is a "Quantity, not quality" attitude. The PPO participating dentist must now, use inferior materials and not take the time they would normally schedule to complete a specific procedure. This decrease in quality and time relates to less than ideal clinical dentistry and a significant compromise for their patients.

One of the most notorious dental insurance companies in the PPO business is Delta Dental. It has become the "Thornintheside" for most dentists because of their philosophy to hold payments, lose X-rays, and question recommended treatment. In fact they have just recently reduced the percentage that they will pay from 90% to 80%. They say they need to do this to be competitive in the dental insurance market, yet they have not increased yearly dental benefits since 1958 and have not allowed dentists to raise their fees to even equal the cost of living index. As a result of how influential Delta has become, many dentists actually recommend treatment based on what the insurance company will pay. As far as I am concerned, this is malpractice. The insurance company should not be allowed in the treatment room! The dentist is the one who spent 89 years in school to treat patients, not the insurance company.

Since we are devoted to practicing exceptional, non compromising dental care, and will continue to do so in the future it is not in the best interest of our patients or ourselves to participate in any insurance programs. Our fees are not unreasonable, and in fact offer our patients an excellent value. Unfortunately, insurance companies are in the business of making money, and lots of it! Most of the largest buildings in the world are owned by insurance companies and the top paid executives are insurance company CEOs, yet they want to put huge amalgams in every mouth in America! This high income for the insurance companies is not compatible with paying clinicians what they are worth or what is in the best interest of the patient.

Many insurance patients may not initially understand why we are not insurance providers. Their copayment will now be higher than before and they will now be paying monies directly to us instead of just letting a form and letting us take care of it. We must educate them as to why we have chosen not to participate. We must educate them that what we provide in quality dental care and customer service would not be possible if we reduced our fees to conform with Delta's recommended fees. We must also let them know, that the insurance company will pay, them (the patient) within 23 weeks, whereas they, will not pay us for 68 weeks and sometimes not at all!

Below are just a few of the responses that can be given to patients when they ask about insurance:

1. The insurance must be made out to be the bad guy, not the dentist! Let the patient know that Delta has changed their percentages to lessen the patient's benefits and make more money for themselves. Tell the patient that Delta is changing to offer less benefits, restrict the quality of care, and limit the usage of more "up to date" dental treatment. Explain to the patients that in fact some patients have switched to another dentist who is willing to compromise. However, once they experienced the difficulty in scheduling appointments, the lack of personalized service, and the feeling that they were just a number, they have returned to our office and have become our biggest supporters.

2. Explain to them that we will help them process their claims, but we are no longer a Delta Dental Provider because of the cuts and compromises Delta has made in terms of quality of care. Reassure them that we will provide them with letters, photos, and explanations to help them get the coverage and reimbursement they deserve.

3. This is a great opportunity to further educate outpatients as to our philosophy about quality treatment. Make them realize that we will not, under any circumstance, jeopardize the quality of care we provide or compromise our ethics or professional judgement. Reinforce that the insurance company is out to make money at the expense of quality care.

4. We will lose some patients! These are the patients that we have failed to educate about the benefits of quality care or are not interested in the best for themselves. As with all businesses, we are not for everyone. We cannot be everyone's dentists. Not everyone wants a Mercedes or Lexus, or shops at Nordstroms, but those that do would never have it any other way and will enthusiastically talk to their friends and family about the quality of service and product. We want to provide such a great product and service, that we too would be enthusiastically recommended to friends and family.

5. As an employee of this office, you must be excited about the quality of care we provide and feel comfortable that our patients are not paying huge prices, but rather receiving an exceptional value for the service and care they are receiving. Imagine the great deal it would be to have the opportunity to purchase a brand new \$50,000 Mercedes for only \$30,000. It is still more money than a Honda or Toyota, but the value is so great that it cannot be passed up. This is what we provide our patients! A great Value! So educate them!