

Practice News - April / May 2006

I would like to use the column posted the next two months to help explain the differences between the types of fillings we use in the practice. The more traditional filling material is the amalgam, or silver, filling. This is the material that I learned the most about in dental school. It has been around for decades and is a tried and true material for filling teeth, especially in the back teeth. The advantages to the silver filling is that it is slightly less expensive than the tooth colored fillings and in most instances it is easier to place in the tooth. The disadvantages are that the color is ugly and it cannot be used in the front of the mouth. The material does not adhere to the tooth so we often have to put grooves and notches in the tooth to get the material to hold. This in turn means we have to take more tooth structure away to have a successful filling.

The other filling material I use in the practice is the tooth colored, or resin, material. I use this material approximately 80% of the time for back tooth fillings and 100% of the time in front tooth fillings. The main advantage of this material is that it is actually chemically bonded to the tooth. This in turn means I can make the cavity hole smaller since no grooves and notches are needed to hold the filling in place. In small fillings, studies have actually shown that bonded resins can often strengthen teeth. Other advantages include better looking fillings that appear natural and, most importantly, a decrease in sensitivity.

The main disadvantage to the resin filling is the fact that they are sometimes more difficult for the dentist or dental assistant to place. The mouth has to be kept very dry and this is not always possible. I also feel that very large fillings in the back of the mouth are best restored by either a silver filling or a cap because large resin fillings are difficult to contour and shape like a tooth.

The discussion on the two types of fillings used in dentistry in the previous paragraphs only scratches the surface of the characteristics of the materials. There are many more areas that can be discussed dealing with both the amalgam and the resin. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have on any aspect of the materials we use at Stahly Family Dentistry.

As always, any feedback, whether positive or negative, is welcome. You can contact any of us via e-mail. Thanks for viewing the website.

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