

## Some facts and figures

Mercury is toxic to human health and environment

Dental amalgam is composed of approximately 50% elemental mercury and of 50% silver-zinc-tin-copper alloy

An estimated 250-350 metric tonnes of mercury was used for dental amalgam in 2005, representing approximately 10% of global consumption, or 20% of total global mercury consumption in products

Dental amalgam is often the largest source of mercury in municipal wastewater: in the soil via wastewater sludge, land disposal and the burial of deceased persons with fillings. It is also an important source of mercury air pollution from wastewater sludge incineration and cremation due to the amalgam retained in the teeth of the deceased

Mercury-free dental restoration materials reduce mercury pollution and contribute to preserve our ecosystems for future generations

### Contacts:

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For further information, please visit:  
[www.who.int/oral\\_health](http://www.who.int/oral_health)  
[www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances](http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances)

This brochure was developed as part of the East Africa Dental Amalgam Phase-down Project.

## Dental amalgam and its impact on the environment

### Information for Patients



Tooth decay affects your quality of life

Prevention is the best way to ensure a healthy mouth

In case of tooth decay, the dentist will advise on the treatment and the appropriate dental filling

Visit the dentist regularly



### Important facts about dental caries

- Tooth decay affects most people
- Tooth decay affects quality of life
- Tooth decay is a burden to the patient and society
- If left untreated, tooth decay may cause pain and discomfort
- Decayed teeth need to be restored to eliminate pain or discomfort and be able to chew food and smile

### Dental care

- Decayed teeth may be filled by dentists using materials such as silver (amalgam) or tooth coloured alternatives
- Amalgam fillings, which have been used widely for many years, are a mixture of silver and mercury
- New materials available (e.g., resin composites and glass ionomers) are similar in colour to natural teeth and free of mercury

### Ask your dentist about

- the best choice of dental restoration material, depending on your individual needs, to restore teeth to its normal function

### How to prevent tooth decay

- Remember that prevention is the best way to keep a healthy mouth and your teeth in good function
- Prevention must start as early as birth
- You and your family can help prevent tooth decay by exercising good mouth hygiene, regular brushing of teeth with toothpaste containing fluoride and by avoiding excessive intake of sugar
- Use of fluoride helps prevent tooth decay
- Visit the dentist regularly and have your teeth checked. He can detect tooth decay at an early stage and progression may be prevented

