

# Preventive Care Makes a Difference

A healthy smile, good breath, and strong teeth and gums are just some of the benefits of good oral health. Proper oral care can help your teeth last a lifetime.

Regular visits to your dentist will prevent serious oral health problems down the road. Preventive care for your teeth includes proper brushing and flossing, and regular visits to your dentist. Your dental plan covers routine exams and cleanings at regular intervals. Consult with your dentist to determine the best frequency of check-ups for you.

To inquire about your preventive benefits, or to find a network dentist under your plan, please call our Benefit Advisors at **800-236-3712**.



DELTA DENTAL OF WISCONSIN  
PO Box 828  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481

[www.deltadentalwi.com](http://www.deltadentalwi.com)

# Made to Last a Lifetime

Facts about oral health and restorative care.



# Cavities Create a Lifetime of Costs

Most adults know that cavities can be a bit painful and an inconvenience, but over a person's lifetime, a single, initial cavity has serious economic consequences as well.

Since fillings wear out or fail over time and must be repaired, the cost of maintaining a single tooth that has a filling may exceed \$2,000 over a person's lifetime. If a patient has several cavities, the costs rise accordingly.

That's because fillings wear out over time and have to be replaced with crowns, which are more expensive. The lifetime cost of a cavity also increases when a tooth requires endodontics, or root canal treatment, or extraction and replacement with a prosthetic tooth.

Over a lifetime, just one cavity is expensive — two or more drive expenses well above the lifetime cost of preventive care. When a patient works with his or her dentist, cavities are almost entirely preventable.



## What Kind of Filling Should You Have?

Generally, dentists recommend two types of fillings for treatment of cavities.

An **amalgam** filling is the most common type. It's a silver-colored material that is safe, durable and economical.

**Composite** fillings are tooth-colored. They are usually recommended for front teeth because they are more cosmetically appealing than amalgam fillings.

## Are Amalgam Fillings Safe?

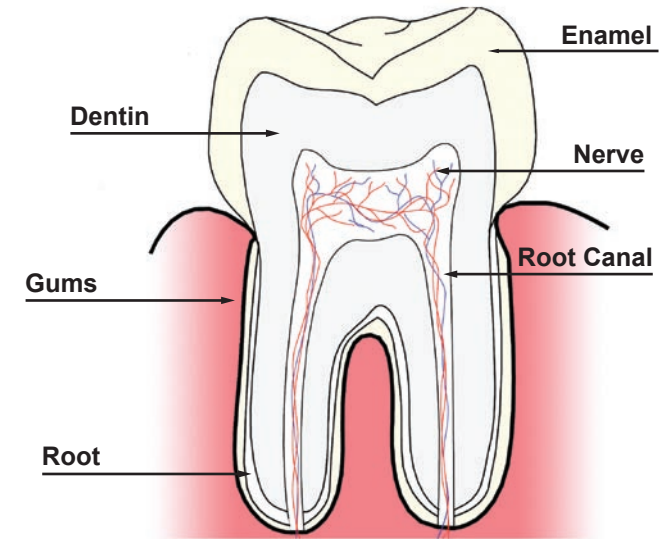
Absolutely. Dentists have been using amalgam fillings to restore teeth for more than 150 years. Amalgam fillings continue to be used because they are safe, durable, and affordable.

The safety of amalgam fillings has been affirmed by numerous studies, and the American Dental Association. If you have questions about this or any oral health issue, we encourage you to talk to your dentist.

## If You Already Have Fillings

While prevention is the most cost-effective route, persons who already have fillings can take steps to minimize the lifetime maintenance costs.

- Smaller fillings result in less tooth damage and repair damage. So if you have a cavity, getting it fixed early is better than waiting for more extensive decay.
- Don't replace fillings unless it is necessary to do so. While there are currently no permanent restorative materials available to treat cavities, fillings typically do last a long time. There is a risk of damage or injury to a tooth every time it is restored, and jumping to larger fillings or crowns before they are needed could reduce the lifetime of a tooth.



## What About Cracks?

- Most adult teeth display naturally occurring cracks in their outer protective enamel.
- Enamel cracks do not weaken teeth unless they extend into the inner dentin body of the tooth.
- Enamel cracks do not necessarily indicate that a tooth is cracked.
- Cracked teeth usually give warning signs, such as sensitivity when biting that rapidly goes away when the pressure is released.
- Your dentist can do specific tests, such as biting pressure and cold sensitivity tests to determine if a tooth is cracked.

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