

# Is your dentistry affecting your health?

Dentistry has evolved dramatically over the years, yet many individuals still have outdated dental work that may be impacting their overall health. While traditional metal crowns and mercury fillings were once the standard in restorative dentistry, modern research has uncovered potential risks associated with these materials. Additionally, failing dental work doesn't always cause pain, break, or fall out, and as a result

many people are completely unaware they have underlying dental issues. The long-term effects of neglected or aging restorations can include periodontal disease, dental abscesses, and even adverse effects on the heart and immune system.

**The health risks of outdated dental work**

- Toxicity and systemic effects
- Structural concerns
- Periodontal issues

• Heart health concerns

**Toxicity and systemic effects**

Dental amalgam, commonly known as mercury or silver fillings, has been used for decades due to its durability and affordability. It contains a mixture of metals, including mercury, silver, tin, and copper. Over time, amalgam fillings may release small amounts of mercury vapor, particularly when chewing or consuming hot foods and

beverages. The body naturally eliminates most of this exposure, but some individuals, especially those with mercury sensitivities or pre-existing health conditions, may prefer to opt for alternative materials. As a result, many advanced dental professionals now offer porcelain restorations, composite resins, and other biocompatible options as safer and more aesthetically pleasing alternatives.

**Structural concerns**

Beyond potential health implications, outdated metal fillings and crowns can compromise the structural integrity of teeth. Metal fillings expand and contract with temperature changes, which can lead to fractures in the tooth structure, weakening natural teeth and increasing the risk of breakage or decay beneath the filling. Many patients are unaware of these fractures until they experience a broken tooth, require a root canal, or face another dental emergency.

Being proactive with dental care can help prevent these issues. Replacing aging restorations with porcelain alternatives provides a more predictable and durable solution and also can help with stability for chewing and function. Additionally, poorly fitted metal crowns can cause bite misalign-



**Dentally Speaking**  
by Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

ment, leading to jaw pain, headaches, and even temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders over time.

**Periodontal issues**

Metal dental restorations can contribute to gum inflammation and periodontal disease. Ill-fitting crowns and aging metal fillings create small gaps where bacteria accumulate, leading to infection and gum recession. These "food traps" are not just an annoyance for patients—they can also cause serious gum health issues.

Additionally, some individuals experience allergic reactions or sensitivities to metal, resulting in chronic irritation and inflammation of the gums. Over time, this can lead to bone loss, tooth instability, and an increased risk of severe periodontal disease. Replacing older dental work with modern materials can close these gaps, restore teeth to their proper contours, and significantly improve gum health.

**Heart health concerns**

There is a well-documented connection between oral health and heart disease. Older dental restorations, particularly those that contribute to periodontal disease, can increase the risk of cardiovascular problems.

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