Most adults have fillings or other dental work in some of our teeth. Often this dental work uses a material called “amalgam.” It contains mercury and other metals, such as zinc, tin, copper, or silver.

Dentists have used amalgams for nearly 200 years. Some people think they are dangerous because of the mercury, but studies do not show that this is true.

In recent years, many dentists have been replacing fillings that contain some mercury. But replacing them isn’t necessary. Here’s why:

**Studies do not show any dangers from fillings with mercury.**

Amalgam dental fillings have very small amounts of mercury. The amount of mercury that might leak out is not dangerous. It causes no harm, except for very rare allergic reactions. You get much more mercury from eating certain seafoods.

Replacing fillings can harm teeth.

The heavy drilling to remove and replace fillings can weaken teeth. Then you may need other dental work, like crowns or caps.

To replace several fillings, your dentist might use a general anesthetic. This has a small risk.
It can cost a lot to replace fillings.
A basic filling can cost more than $200. If a crown is needed, it can cost $1,000 or more. It can cost thousands of dollars to replace all your fillings.

So, when should fillings with mercury in them be replaced?
It is simple. Don’t replace them only because they contain mercury. It’s fine to replace them if you need another dental procedure.

What if I do need a filling replaced?
Removing a filling releases more mercury than leaving the filling alone. But it is not dangerous. If you need to have a filling removed because you need other dental work, don’t worry.

Dentists use materials called restorations to restore teeth. Many dentists will use restorations made from resin composite, glass ionomer, porcelain, or gold alloys. None of these contain mercury. Some dentists still use mercury-containing amalgams, especially in back teeth. You can ask for another kind if you prefer.