

# Ask the Tooth Doctor

**Q: I have a mouthful of dark, silver fillings that do not look good. What can be done?**

**A:** Silver amalgam fillings create dark shadowed areas on your teeth and give your smile an unnatural appearance. People can see them when you open your mouth to smile, laugh or yawn.

Silver fillings contain up to 40% mercury, so there is a tendency for the filling material to expand and contract. When we eat or drink hot and cold substances, this can lead to fractures of the tooth structure that weaken the tooth and allows bacteria to infiltrate deep within the tooth's structure.

Dentists can create tooth-colored fillings in a single visit using

composite resin that are bonded to the tooth structure.

These natural looking fillings

are good in small to moderate sized cavities. With larger cavities or filling replacements, tooth-colored materials are used to create restorations called onlays that are stronger, more durable and extremely esthetic. These, too, are bonded to the tooth structure and actually strengthen the teeth and reduce the need for crowns. Tooth-colored restorations are as strong as they are beautiful and a great alternative to silver fillings.



**Dr. Charles Briscoe**

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