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COMPOSITE FILLINGS:

This practice uses composite material to restore broken teeth.
Advantages of composite fillings over amalgam (silver) fillings:

1. Are attractive and natural looking, due to their tooth coloured appearance (aesthetic)
2. Strong and durable
3. Can be easily fixed when damaged.
4. They bond to tooth structure, thereby supporting the remaining tooth structure.
5. Can be used in very small cavities, making it possible to conserve as much tooth as possible.
6. Come in many tooth colours making invisible fillings possible.
7. Don't crack teeth like silver amalgams do.

Disadvantage of composites is that they are very technique sensitive and need proper isolation during bonding and take up to 3 times longer to place than a silver amalgam filling. Because of this and the high cost of the bonding agents and material cost, these fillings are much more expensive than silver amalgam fillings.

SILVER AMALGAM FILLINGS:

Advantages of amalgam fillings over composite fillings:

1. Still the mainstay of dental fillings, because of their cost effectiveness and ease of use.
2. Very durable and longlasting.
3. Amalgam can be useful for people with poor oral hygiene, limited funds and where moisture control is problematic.

Disadvantages:

1. Contain mercury
2. Crack teeth over time
3. Not aesthetic
4. Don't bond to tooth structure and require substantial removal of sound tooth structure to create retention.
5. Silver amalgams fillings oxidise (rust) and corrode over time and turn black.
6. Don't support remaining tooth structure and thus do not strengthen the tooth.
7. Amalgams cannot be repaired and need to be removed completely, when needing replacement.

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WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A TOOTH IS RESTORED:

Restoring a tooth usually entails cutting into living tooth structure to remove decay or a broken filling. In essence we are doing surgery on a tooth, but it is on a very hard organic structure and the scalpel is a diamond bur (drill bit).

Lots of water cooling is used to prevent overheating the delicate nerve and blood supply to the tooth. Thousands of nerve fibers that lie within tubules within the tooth structure are cut. If the decay is under the gum surrounding the tooth the gum inevitable has to be cut away as well. Once the tooth has been shaped and cleaned the tooth can be restored to its original shape, size and colour. This usually involves bonding or cementing the restoration to the remaining tooth structure. An inert material is joined to a living thing.

After having received a filling you should expect some discomfort for a few days. This could be from injection bruising (needle goes into muscle); from the gum or from the tooth itself. Tooth sensitivity is a common problem after restorative work has been done, but usually goes away within a few weeks. The tooth needs time to heal after the operation and similar to bone, it can take time.

Once the injection has worn off, you might find that the bite feels wrong. Although the bite is adjusted at the restorative phase the local anaesthetic can make it difficult to feel. A proud filling can cause severe toothache and you should come back for a no charge adjustment.

If the tooth was severely decayed there is a good chance, that the tooth might need root canal therapy. This usually happens if the tooth does not heal and develops an irreversible pulpitis. Such a tooth will throb, be heat sensitive, sore to touch or bite on and ache continuously with waves of severe pain.

AFTERCARE:

You have just received a beautiful handmade restoration of your teeth.

What now?

1. You can drink something cold immediately.
2. Only eat once the anaesthetic has worn off.
3. Avoid extremely cold or hot foods/drinks.
4. If the bite feels proud/wrong phone reception to arrange for an adjustment.
5. If the tooth reacts to cold or feels slightly on edge, hang in there and be patient. It usually resolves and the tooth awareness goes away.
6. If you are very concerned, please phone or e-mail.