



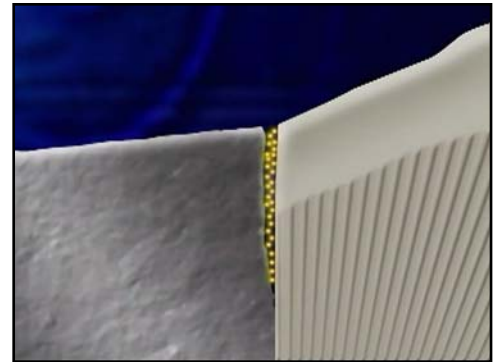
# Leaking Silver Amalgam Fillings

For your dental health.

A common misconception is that a silver filling will last forever. Amalgam is one of the most durable filling materials, but amalgam fillings don't last forever. Some may last for more than a decade, but others can begin to fail in as little as five years.

## What is a leaking filling?

Even when a filling isn't loose or obviously broken, it may still have problems. For a filling to protect your tooth, it has to seal out bacteria. When a filling has begun to let bacteria into the tooth, we say that the filling is leaking.

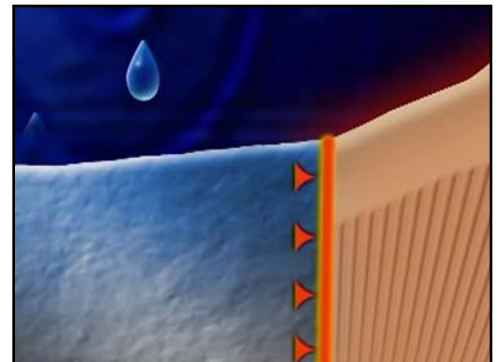


*Bacteria between the tooth and filling*

## What causes a filling to leak?

Many conditions in the mouth can cause an amalgam filling to leak:

- Amalgam fillings swell when they absorb the natural moisture in your mouth. This expansion creates a wedging effect in the tooth that can fracture or break off tooth structure.
- This expansion can also lift the surface of the filling slightly in the tooth, creating a gap at the margin between the filling and the tooth.
- Temperature changes in the mouth can make the amalgam both expand and contract, creating many small gaps or micro-fractures in the tooth or filling.
- As amalgam fillings age, they turn black and the edges of the fillings wear away.



*Expansion caused by moisture*

## Replacing the filling

Because a leaking filling no longer protects the tooth, more decay and other more serious problems may occur. When this happens, it's important to replace the filling with another restoration.

We'll inspect your fillings every time you come in for a checkup and recommend a new restoration at the appropriate time.



*Inspecting fillings*