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Mercury Toxicity, Amalgam Fillings & Choosing Holistic Dentistry

A Consumer's Guide to Quality
Holistic Dental Care.



**By: Dr. Reid Winick, D.D.S.
Dentistry for Health New York**

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Notice: I believe this report is educational and helpful. If you have any questions, or would like to schedule an appointment, please call the office of Dr. Reid Winick at 212-973-9425.

Choosing a Holistic Dentist

The first step in choosing a holistic dentist is to understand just what makes this specialty so unique: it combines modern dental practices with proven, long-established traditions of natural healing. **Holistic dentistry** is a specific, organic approach that views oral health as one part of the patient's overall well-being.

Dentists who have chosen the holistic approach have the same degrees and training as traditional dentists. Holistic practitioners focus on long-term preventive care and prefer to use non-invasive procedures whenever possible. They believe that the body can maintain itself in a constant state of health if given the right tools, which include nutrition and biochemistry. For example, experienced holistic practitioners stress the importance of strengthening the immune system to help fight infection - including oral and periodontal infections.

How is holistic dentistry different from the work of a traditional dentist? A holistic practitioner's realm encompasses overall health, including the oral health area on which traditional dentists concentrate. These divergent perspectives bring some real differences in diagnosis, treatment, and practice. Holistic practitioners stress the importance of preserving teeth--even those which a traditional dentist might have suggested removing.

Holistic dentists use fewer surgical procedures. Instead, they strive to prevent future cavities and gum disease. By taking the time to talk with patients about their individual lifestyle and diet, they're able to recommend any specific changes that might bring oral health benefits. Often, for instance, a holistic dentist will suggest certain foods to eat or to avoid to improve tooth and gum health.

With their strong concern about patient safety, most holistic dentists use digital, low-radiation x-rays, which require only minimal exposure. They select dental materials to suit each patient's unique immune system. In a holistic dental office, you may find filtered, purified water and special air cleaners. Some practitioners design their treatment areas to protect patients who may have allergies, and to utilize the therapeutic benefits of sunlight. Most holistic dentists want to help their patients relax and experience none of the unpleasant elements that have made so many people dread visiting a dentist.

Filling You In On Fillings

A central practice in holistic dentistry is filling cavities only with mercury-free materials, typically porcelain and white composite. Traditional dentistry has long employed “silver” fillings (technically known as amalgams). While they certainly look like silver, amalgams are actually 50% mercury – the most toxic non-radioactive element.

Sometimes patients who learn of the possible health dangers of mercury-based fillings decide to seek a holistic dentist to remove them. But when it comes to selecting a particular practitioner, keep in mind that simply removing your amalgam fillings isn't the only consideration. Since it's a holistic specialty, take your own holistic view of any dentist you're considering: base your decision on his or her full range of services, procedures, experience and approaches.

Find out how each dentist will strive to protect your overall --not just dental -- health. Unfortunately, some dentists believe that removing and replacing an amalgam with some kind of white material constitutes the total dental revision service of holistic dentistry. Oral health is so important that it's worth taking the time to “comparison-shop” among dental professionals. Try not to make insurance coverage the most important factor in your decision.

The Screening Process

Here are some suggestions to help guide you in choosing a holistic dentist.

1. Determine your own reasons for considering a switch to holistic dentistry. You may simply feel that you'd prefer to be treated by a health care professional whose holistic approach will meet your oral health needs by integrating them into maintaining and improving your overall well-being.

If you've become particularly concerned about the potential long-term hazards of mercury fillings, you'll want to seek out **a dentist who truly understands the latest findings about mercury.**

NOTE: If you'd like to learn more about amalgams before you begin interviewing holistic dentists, visit www.toxicteeth.org or www.dams.cc.

2. Once you establish your personal priorities for working with a holistic dentist, choose one or more that you would like to interview. To gather referrals, first ask among your network of friends, business associates and family to see if anyone has been treated by a holistic

dentist he or she would recommend. If you've worked with a chiropractor, nutritionist or other "alternative" health care practitioner, check with their office to see if they can recommend a dentist who shares the same philosophy.

NOTE: The Holistic Dental Association at www.holisticdental.org or the International Academy of Oral Medicine & Toxicology located at www.iaomt.org will be able to provide you with referrals in your own geographic area.

3. Actually, choosing a holistic dentist is part of assembling a skilled, experienced team to provide the kind of treatment that you have selected, whether it's amalgam removal or general dental services. The other practitioners on your own team may include a nutritionist, specially trained MD, DO or Chiropractor; lymphatic massage therapist; etc.

At your initial meeting with a holistic dentist, begin by asking about his or her background. Here are some key questions:

- How long ago, and why, did you decide to practice mercury-free dentistry?
- What is your own diet and lifestyle like?
- How much training have you had in the issues of mercury detoxification?
- Are other professionals involved in your holistic treatment of a patient? If so, what fields are they in? In what ways do you or your patient work with them?

4. Find out if the **holistic dentist is familiar with biocompatibility**. Dentists who choose to utilize biocompatibility information will get a report on the results of tests assessing your immune system's reactions to various materials used in dentistry. The tests determine how sensitive you happen to be to different dental materials. A Biocompatibility Report guides your dentist to use those materials deemed safest for you for each specific dental procedure.
5. Choose a holistic dentist **who is familiar with the many different procedures involved in the heavy metal detoxification process**. These include (but are not limited to) I.V. Vitamin C, DMPS, DMSA, EDTA, Chlorella, FAR-Infrared Saunas, Hair Analysis, Urine-Mercury Challenge Tests, etc. Since heavy metal detox is such an individualized treatment, it is important that your dentist is familiar with more than one detoxification protocol.

- 6.** A skilled holistic dentist is experienced and knowledgeable in certain important techniques and professional issues. Ask any dentist you interview if he or she is familiar with:
 - Amalgam tattoos and their required treatment. An amalgam tattoo is a benign discoloration of the mouth membrane, caused by amalgam particles. Some people are sensitive to one of more components of the tattoo – usually containing mercury, silver and copper.
 - Cavitation [a hole in the bone] and the different protocols for treating them.
 - The root-canal controversy. Holistic health experts believe that all root-canal teeth emit some degree of toxins. Find out how this dentist deals with a tooth that has had a root-canal. (A one-size-fits-all approach is not preferable; any decision to extract a root-canal tooth should be based on a patient's specific situation.)

- 7.** Ask what the dental examinations will entail. Optimally, it should include evaluations of both hard (teeth) and soft (gums; neck areas) tissue. Ask if the X-rays are digital low-dose radiation, and what they will look at. (They should locate decayed teeth, defective fillings, missing teeth, cavitations, root canal or dead teeth.)

- 8.** Find out if the dentist will do a microscopic analysis to evaluate the different types of bacteria under your gums. This information will allow for a specific regimen to be tailored to your own bacterial level.

- 9.** A well-trained holistic dentist has a good foundation in nutrition, herbs, homeopathy, vitamins and supplements. Be sure to ask about the practitioner's background in these areas.

- 10.** Ask whether the dentist keeps up to date with advances in technology. Familiarity with newer approaches, such as lasers, is a definite plus for the patient, because they can more easily solve some problems that used to require complicated treatments.

- 11.** Uses ozone and low level lasers to disinfect the teeth and gums during treatment.

12. If you're thinking of amalgam removal, ask the dentist to describe the procedure he or she uses for removal and replacement. Review them carefully. Find out where these protocols were developed. For safe treatment, we recommend selecting a holistic dentist who follows the protocol developed by the IAOMT, DAMS International, or Dr. Hal Huggins, a pioneer of modern holistic dentistry.

13. Every dentist is trained in school to remove amalgam fillings. However, many do not have all the recommended safety equipment for this complex procedure. During the removal process, the most complete protection for the patient includes: using a rubber dam or a special suction device; supplying copious amounts of water with special suction while amalgams and nickel crowns are being cut with a high-speed drill; placing only those dental materials proven to be biocompatible with you; having negative ion generators to remove the massive amount of mercury vapor which will be released into the dental office. During your interviews, ask each holistic dentist to review the equipment and procedures used during removal of crowns and amalgams.

14. How can you tell when you're ready to select the dentist you want to work with? It is very important to educate yourself before making any decision, especially where your health is concerned. Only you can determine what feels right for you.

Do everything you can to put your mind at ease about your selection. Read about the available literature, talk to people, and don't hesitate to ask the dentist about any of your concerns or areas of indecision. Ultimately, making a choice will evolve into an excellent exercise in trusting your gut feelings and intuition.

Some patients need to gradually gather substantial information specific to their individual situations. Many are so comfortable when they do reach a decision that they schedule their appointments promptly. Somewhere during the exploration process, you'll reach a point where you feel particularly confident in and comfortable with one particular dentist, and you'll know you're ready to make a decision.

What to Expect as Treatment Begins

Once you select the holistic dentist to treat you, the procedures and their sequence will seem very different from traditional dentistry. Here are some steps you'll probably experience as treatment begins.

- If examinations and discussions determine that your treatment will include removal of amalgam fillings, nickel crowns, and root canal effects, be sure to arrange appointments for all of the "removal procedures" within a time frame of one month, or less, if at all possible. Your treatments should be at least 48 hours apart.
- Your dentist will work with you to set up an appointment schedule in accordance with the 7 - 14 - 21 day immune cycles. Heeding this cycle will help you avoid the danger of developing an autoimmune condition you would not have had otherwise.
- Your dentist will take electrical readings on all your fillings and crowns in order to determine the best order for performing any needed restorations.
- From the available detoxification procedures your dentist describes, select the one that seems most acceptable to you. Be careful to find the balance between adequate and overdoing. Two to three procedures per week will suffice for most people; six to seven per week is overdoing it for almost anyone. The biggest potential problem of dental revision is **too much detoxification too fast**. This advice encompasses detoxification medications as well as FAR-Infrared Saunas, etc. Get as much information as you can before you make your selection.
- Plan your treatment jointly with as many different health providers as you and your dentist feel are optimal for your overall health. Choose the physician, lymphatic massage therapist, nutritionist, detoxification doctor or other health professionals so that the timing of their services complement each other and do not interfere with the final results of your dental treatments.
- Start your nutritional program, based on your consultations, as soon as it's feasible in your program.
- Observe your patient protection protocol as closely as possible during your removal procedures.

Mercury Toxicity

During examinations by a skilled holistic dentist, some patients will learn that they have “mercury toxicity.” If it turns out that you’ve developed this condition, the best first step you can take is to educate yourself about the issues of mercury exposure. **Do** read, talk to people, and ask questions in order to gain some basic knowledge before you make any significant decisions about your treatment.

A key fact you’ll learn in your research is that detoxification should **not** begin before the **source** of mercury is removed. But **do not** start to remove the mercury until you learn what is needed to safely and properly remove this element, once you feel certain that you would prefer to replace your amalgams with safer materials.

Then, **make sure your dentist begins your detoxification program two to three weeks before starting the amalgam removal process.**

A Note of Caution:

Be leery of the eager dentist who wants to remove your amalgam fillings immediately if you are found to already have mercury toxicity. It is true that the longer the source of mercury remains in place, the more accumulated damage is possible. But it’s even more important to proceed with extra care. Do not rush into beginning your amalgam removal program before you’ve taken precautions to protect yourself throughout the process. An intricate protocol is needed to assure your safety while the mercury source is being removed and any dental fillings, crowns, etc. are being replaced with biocompatible materials. After the procedures, a skilled practitioner will take all the required steps to detoxify your body by removing all remaining mercury from your system.

THANK YOU'S

Dr. Winick would like to thank Dr. Hal Huggins and the International Academy of Oral Medicine & Toxicology (I.A.O.M.T.) for providing the information on which this report is based.

RESOURCES FOR READERS

For Further Reading I Recommend These Two Excellent Books by Dr. Hal A. Huggins, DDS

- [It's All in Your Head: The Link Between Mercury Amalgams & Illness](#)
- [Uniformed Consent: The Hidden Dangers in Dental Care](#)

You might also contact the I.A.O.M.T. [www.toxicteeth.org] and/or DAMS International [www.dams.cc] for additional information.