

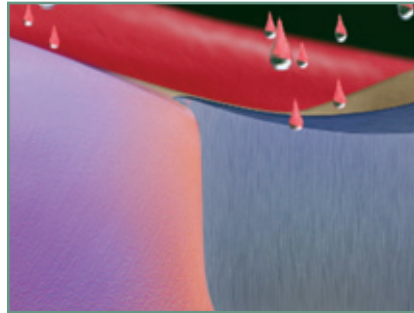
# Failing Amalgam Fillings

A common misconception is that a silver amalgam filling will last forever. Amalgam fillings are very durable, but eventually they will fail and need to be replaced. We consider a filling to be failing when it no longer seals out bacteria and allows them to infect the inner layers of the tooth.

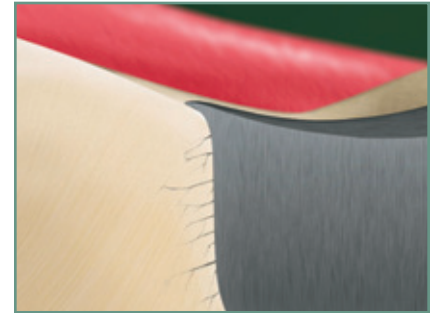
Replacing a failing amalgam filling with a new restoration can prevent more decay from developing and keep your mouth healthy.



*Bacteria between the tooth and filling*



*Expansion caused by moisture*



*Micro-fractures*

## What causes an amalgam filling to fail?

Many conditions in the mouth can cause an amalgam filling to fail, including:

- Time and wear
- Moisture in the mouth
- Temperature changes

Fillings have to endure an incredible amount of biting force. Over time, they become worn and turn black, and their edges wear away.

Amalgam fillings swell when they absorb the natural moisture in your mouth. This expansion can create a wedging effect in the tooth, which can fracture or break off tooth structure. The expansion can also lift the surface of the filling slightly, creating a gap where the filling meets the tooth, and allowing bacteria into the tooth.

Temperature changes in the mouth can make the amalgam expand and contract, and this creates many small gaps or micro-fractures in the tooth or filling.

## Replacing the filling

When we discover a failing amalgam filling, it's important to replace it with another restoration as soon as possible to protect your tooth. There are several types of restorations, including fillings, inlays, onlays, and crowns, and these can be fabricated from a variety of different dental materials. After doing a thorough exam, we'll recommend the best restoration for your situation.