

FDA Long Overdue in Addressing Mercury Fillings

Excerpt from NBC Nightly News Interview with Tom Costello



Bill Wolfe D.D.S.

Mercury has been a key component in silver amalgam dental fillings since before the Civil War, but the appropriate level of exposure to the toxin is once again under review. NBC's Tom Costello reports.

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor: The federal government is again going to look into the safety of the fillings that tens of millions of us already have. The fillings in question are the silver kind, and the concern here is mercury. *The American Dental Association* insists the fillings are safe, but many people believe the mercury can lead to serious health problems. Our own Tom Costello has the latest on this.

TOM COSTELLO reporting: At first, doctors thought Freya Koss might have lupus or MS. Her face was drooping, she had double vision, was exhausted and was losing her balance. After a doctor suspected acute mercury toxicity, her dentist removed all 12 mercury fillings. Slowly her symptoms began to disappear.

Ms. FREYA KOSS (Mercury-Free Dental Patient): There is absolutely no question that I was mercury poisoned. I had never had those symptoms before in my life.

COSTELLO: Mercury is a known neurotoxin linked to brain, liver and kidney damage, and some researchers believe Alzheimer's.

Yet it's been a component in silver amalgam fillings since before the civil war, and today remains a durable, affordable alternative to more expensive composite fillings. In 2008, the FDA warned pregnant women and children to avoid exposure to amalgam. Then last year, it offered a new mixed message, raising the risk from low to moderate, but stating, "The levels released by dental amalgam fillings are not high enough to cause harm in patients." Now the FDA is asking an outside panel to review that decision and assess how much mercury are dental patients exposed to now, and how much exposure is acceptable. *The American Dental Association* insists mercury amalgam fillings are safe.

Dr. ADA COOPER (American Dental Association Consumer Advisor): It's effective in being placed in the areas that are difficult to keep clean, in back teeth that have to withstand a lot of force and wear.

COSTELLO: The CDC, NIH and American Cancer Society have all said amalgam fillings appear to be safe. But Denmark, Sweden and Norway have banned dental amalgam.

Dr. MARK BRINER: This is an amalgam filling right here.

COSTELLO: In Connecticut, Dr. Mark Briner is taking mercury out of his patient's mouths.

Dr. BRINER: For over 30 years I've been treating patients, and when we remove their fillings, many, many symptoms disappear.

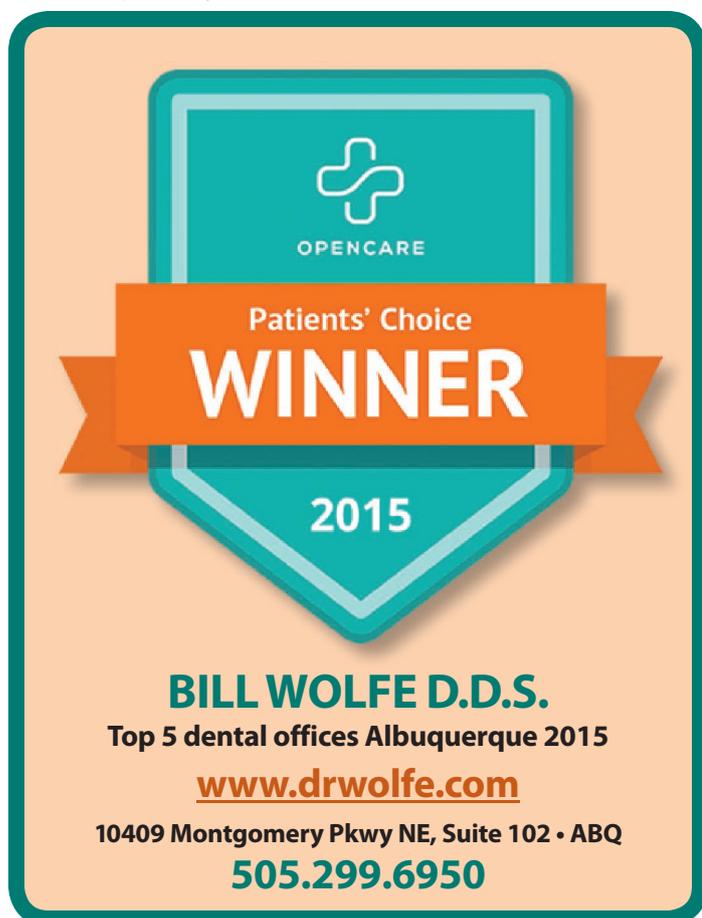
COSTELLO: Now the FDA will again look at the hard science and safety of amalgam.

A statement by Dr. Joe Mercola: For more than 30 years, the FDA has refused to issue any public warning about dental amalgam's neurotoxic risks. In 2009, the FDA actually declared it safe for adults and children over the age of 6, who are not allergic to mercury. This declaration occurred despite the overwhelming evidence showing mercury to be highly toxic and easily released in the form of vapor each time you eat, drink, or brush your teeth.

Mercury fillings are already banned in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, Canada stopped endorsing amalgam for use in children, pregnant women, and people with impaired kidney function, in 1996. Also, the *World Health Organization* called for the phasing-out of amalgam in their 2010 report, *Future Use of Materials for Dental Restoration*: http://www.who.int/oral_health/publications/dental_material_2011.pdf

On September 22, 2011, the FDA promised to make an announcement on amalgam by the end of 2011. With just six minutes left in the work year, at 4:54 pm on Friday, December 30, the FDA conceded that no announcement was forthcoming—not in 2011, and maybe not at all. To date, no announcement has ever been made.

You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today. ~ Abraham Lincoln



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