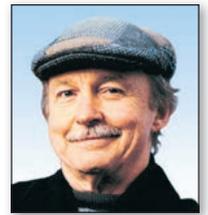


Mercury Fillings Are Decimating the Environment

Excerpted from an article by Charlie Brown, attorney for Consumers for Dental Choice



Bill Wolfe D.D.S.

Did you know that *dentist offices* are the largest source of mercury in wastewater entering publicly owned treatment works? Once there, dental mercury converts to methylmercury, a highly toxic form of mercury known to be hazardous to brain and nervous system function, particularly in fetuses and young children.

Only about a dozen states require dentists to use an amalgam separator, a wastewater treatment device installed at the source, in the dental office, that removes 95-99 percent of the mercury in the wastewater.

In 2010, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would create a rule requiring *all* dentists who use dental amalgam to install amalgam separators. The EPA said the regulation would be finalized by 2012, but earlier this year they announced they may be withdrawing the proposal. Abandoning the long-promised separator rule would be a horrid decision, especially when the EPA acknowledges that there are approximately 160,000 dentists who use or remove amalgam in the US, and discharge their wastewater to publicly owned treatment works.

Dentist Offices Create 3.7 Tons of Mercury Waste a Year

Dental amalgam, a tooth filling material that is at least 50 percent mercury, is the leading intentional use of mercury in the US. Whether a dentist places mercury / amalgam fillings or not, in the removal process of the mercury fillings, amalgam waste gets flushed down the drain, unless dentists install and properly maintain amalgam separators.

Dental amalgam is a considerable source of environmental mercury pollution. Several studies show that about 50 percent of the mercury entering municipal wastewater treatment plants can be traced back to dental amalgam waste. This mercury waste amounts to about 3.7 TONS *each year!* An estimated 90 percent is captured by the treatment plants generally via sewage sludge, some of which ends up in landfills, while other portions are incinerated (thereby polluting the air) or applied as agricultural fertilizer (polluting your food), or seep into waterways (polluting fish and waterways).

It's time that the FDA and the dental schools in charge of educating young dentists start acknowledging the dangers of mercury fillings for humans and for the environment. In addition to the widespread environmental pollution, there is overwhelming evidence showing mercury is easily released in the form of vapor each time you eat, drink, brush your teeth, or otherwise stimulate your teeth. These mercury vapors readily pass through your cell membranes, across your blood-brain barrier, and into your central nervous system, where they can cause psychological, neurological, and immunological problems.

In order to protect human health and the environment, mercury should be phased out as soon, and as quickly, as possible. The Minamata Convention on Mercury, requires the phasing out of many mercury-containing products, including thermometers,

by 2020, and also calls for an end to all mercury mining within 15 years. It also includes a mandatory phase down of amalgam use. The treaty takes effect only after its ratification by 50 nations, which can take three or four years. Instead of working for the phase-down and ultimate phase-out of amalgam use, the FDA and the American Dental Association (ADA) are pushing stalling tactics to delay the demise of mercury fillings.

No more research is needed before we take action – the many effective, affordable, and available mercury-free alternatives have already been researched for over half a century, and we certainly don't need any more research telling us that mercury is a problem. The realistic solution to waste management, of course, is to stop creating more mercury waste. Stop using amalgam.

Help Put an End to Mercury Pollution

Will you please consider a donation to Consumers for Dental Choice, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to advocating mercury-free dentistry? Donations are tax-exempt and can be made online at www.toxicteeth.org.

You cannot fix a problem that you refuse to acknowledge. ~ Margaret Heffernan



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