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### **Dentists Reassure Patients Confused About Dental Filling Safety**

A new survey indicates one in four people have heard that silver-colored fillings (amalgam) are “bad for you” or could cause health problems, despite assurances from major U.S. health agencies that this is not the case. According to the findings, patients who ask about the safety of amalgam during their dental visits are more likely to choose the silver-colored filling than those who do not ask.

“What this tells us is that dentists are doing a good job in reassuring concerned patients that all dental filling materials approved for use in the United States are safe and effective,” says Terry Donovan, DDS, professor and co-director of the advanced education in prosthodontics program at the University of Southern California. “But what about patients who don’t share their concerns? We need to help people sift through this alarmist talk.”

Patients who heard negative reports about amalgam are split on the type of filling they would choose, according to the survey of 1,007 dental patients conducted for the American Dental Association (ADA) by Zogby International. Forty two percent said they were “not likely” to use amalgam while 38 percent said they were “very likely” or

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“likely” to use that type of filling. Of the remaining 20 percent, 10 percent said they were “somewhat likely” to use amalgam and 11 percent were “not sure” (due to rounding, numbers do not equal 100 percent).

Yet, of those patients who asked about the safety of amalgam during their last dental visit, over half (52 percent) reported they were very likely or likely to use amalgam to fill a cavity in their back teeth, compared to 21 percent who said they were not likely to use amalgam.

Dr. Donovan asserted that there’s a wealth of scientific studies, which show there is no relationship between amalgam fillings and adverse health problems, except for a tiny percentage of people who may be allergic to one of the filling’s components.

“Let your common sense be your guide,” Dr. Donovan stressed. “Dentists work with amalgam nearly every day, and research shows they are no more prone to serious health problems than the general population.”

Dr. Donovan urges people to talk to their dentist about any concerns they may have with their oral health. “We want to help patients make informed choices about their oral health treatments based on the best available science and their individual case history.”

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