

> **NOTHING LASTS FOREVER**

JAN
2015

Should amalgam fillings have an expiry date or is it better to wait until there is a specific indication to justify removal? We do not want to over prescribe treatment; but is it prudent to wait until something is amiss first? A few things to consider:

- 82% of cracked tooth syndrome (CTS) occurs in teeth with amalgam restorations
- Only 10% of CTS had a history of a masticatory accident
- Pulp symptoms may only become apparent when a fracture is extensive
- Pulp symptoms need not precede a cuspal fracture
- Shallow amalgam fillings (i.e. floor on enamel) have a higher incidence of cuspal fractures
- There is an 80% chance of avoiding endodontic treatment, if a marginal ridge crack is identified early (i.e. healthy pulp or reversible pulpitis), and a full coverage crown is placed

With these points in mind, it is worth considering removing old amalgam fillings (i.e. > 10 years old) even in the absence of any signs or symptoms. Removal will allow an asymptomatic fracture or leakage to be discovered early and treated; the prognosis for long-term success will be higher and the likelihood of complications lower.

The images on the right are of a case I recently completed. The lady is 81 years old with a 30+ year-old amalgam on 27. Recently, symptomatic apical periodontitis developed and the pulp was discovered to be necrotic. Extensive fractures were present under the amalgam filling, yet there were no accompanying probing defects or mobility. The fractures did not extend across or below the chamber floor. The tooth was taken out of occlusion and a full coverage crown is necessary.

Annual vitality testing may have been able to detect the onset of pulp necrosis years ago. If a crown was placed back then, the fractures were smaller and the pulp healthy. If the current fractures were much deeper this tooth would have been unsalvageable resulting in the loss of molar occlusal contact on the left.

If removal of an old amalgams is only done when a problem is evident our success rates will suffer and our patients will endure more complications. Nothing lasts forever even if it looks as though it might.

Regards,

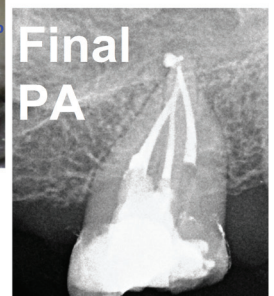
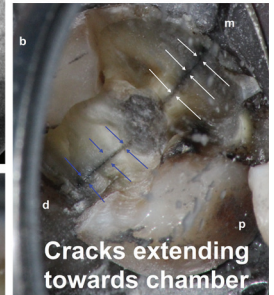
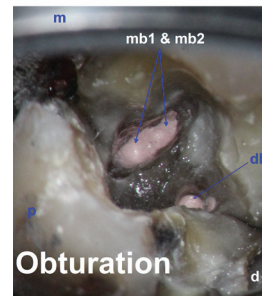
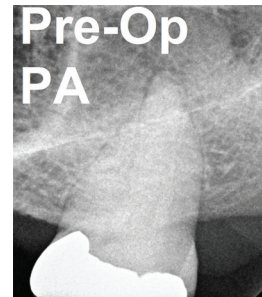


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