

What are white fillings?

White fillings are used to restore broken and decayed teeth in a natural looking way. The material most often used is a composite resin.

Composite fillings have been used since the 1970's to restore dental decay in front teeth. Over time the materials have become stronger and now are sufficiently strong enough to restore back teeth.



Image taken from 3m ESPE product information. Showing filling using Filtek™ Silorane Low Shrink Posterior Restorative System.

What are the advantages of having a white filling?

Composite fillings are bonded to the tooth. Not only does this stop the filling from falling out it also means the tiny porosities within the tooth are sealed, preventing painful stimuli and bacteria from entering the tooth.

What are the risks of having a white filling?

Sometimes a tooth can be sensitive after a filling has been placed. Usually this is temporary but sometimes can be prolonged and the white filling may need to be removed.

All teeth that need fillings or have fillings are weaker than healthy teeth. This means they often crack or a piece breaks away.

Tooth decay and dental treatment cause injury to the tooth nerve. Sometimes this is irreversible, causes pain and the tooth may need root filling.

All dental restorations can fail or need replacement after a period of time. It is not possible to predict when this will happen but on average a posterior white filling will last between 5 and 10 years. Composite fillings sometimes become discoloured and stained around the edges. Sometimes they chip and sometimes the bond is lost and they fall out.

What is the procedure?

After an assessment your dentist will discuss your various options with you and give you a written treatment plan to consider.

At the treatment appointment your dentist will numb your tooth with anaesthetic. After gently removing any old restorations and dental decay your dentist will carefully build your composite restoration. The filling is placed in layers and each layer is set using a bright blue light. It is important during the placement of the filling that the tooth is kept dry and free from saliva. Once the filling is layered and set it will need finishing and polishing to make sure your bite is correct and the surface is smooth.

You need to be careful eating on the new filling for 24hours.

Sometimes composite fillings break – this is more likely to happen when a person eats a hard diet or grinds their teeth.

What are the alternatives?

Usually an old fashioned amalgam (silver) filling can be placed instead, this is often a cheaper faster alternative. However this type of filling sometimes requires further tooth structure removal to help it stay in and it does not seal the tooth from bacteria or painful stimuli.

Laboratory constructed fillings are available. An impression of your tooth is taken and a dental technician carefully builds a restoration from white composite, porcelain or gold to accurately fit your tooth. This would be fitted by your dentist at a separate visit.

How much do they cost?

The cost of the filling varies depending on its size and site in your mouth. A small white filling starts at £63 and larger fillings cost up to £315.

Laboratory made composite and porcelain inlays cost £575.

These fees are subject to change.

White Fillings



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