

Preventive Oral Care Can Prevent BPA Exposure from Dental Fillings

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Submitted by [Denise Reynolds RD](#) on 2010-09-07

Dental fillings and sealants **contain some bisphenol A** (BPA) which may expose children, at least in the short term, to the chemical known for its association with several adverse health effects, such as [heart disease](#), [cancer](#), diabetes, and obesity. Researchers do not know if dental products containing BPA pose long-term health risks, so the best way to avoid the risk is to take care of teeth to prevent decay.

BPA Exposure from Dental Fillings Low, But a Concern for Children

Bisphenol A is a compound used in many products as a strengthening agent. In [dental sealants](#) and composites, the chemical is used as an alternative to mercury amalgam.

BPA was first discovered to leach from [dental products](#) into humans in 1996 when Nicolas Olea and colleagues at the University of Granada in Spain found that saliva can cause fillings and sealants to break down, releasing the chemical into the body.

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Studies are ongoing, including the most recent findings from the Children's Environmental [Health Center](#) at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Study co-authors Philip Landrigan and Abby Fleisch find that BPA levels in saliva can spike to 88 times higher than normal immediately after a dental sealing. Testing finds that BPA levels remain elevated for up to three hours after the procedure, but quickly drop off after that.

"The research that exists shows that upon contact with enzymes in the saliva some, but not all, BPA derivatives break down to pure BPA, and that BPA is said to be in saliva for a short time period of up to three hours," explained Dr. Fleisch, a pediatrician in the department of medicine at Children's Hospital Boston, part of Harvard Medical School.

[Read: EWG Lab Tests Confirm BPA on Customer Receipts](#)

The authors do not recommend a ban on these dental products, but do caution patients and [dentists](#) to take steps that could minimize any potential risks associated with exposure to BPA. The most important step, of course, is preventive oral care especially among children and pregnant women.

Regular brushing teeth and flossing gums is the best way to prevent cavities from forming in the first place. Most children spend less than a minute brushing their teeth, according to Colgate's World of Care website. Oral health care professionals recommend brushing for at least two to three minutes. Parents can encourage proper brushing by setting a timer in the bathroom or by singing a fun song.

Ensure your child brush all chewing surfaces, not just the front "smile" teeth. As soon as any two teeth touch each other, it is time to start flossing. And, of course, a healthy [diet](#) of fresh fruits and vegetables, and low in sugar, will help prevent tooth decay from forming.

Should a cavity occur and a dental sealant containing BPA be recommended, Dr. Fleisch recommends gargling for about 30 seconds following application to remove excess BPA derivatives. Dentists should also take care to clean off the sealant's surface once it has hardened.
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