

INFORMATION SHEET ON RESTORATIVE MATERIALS

When you have a cavity or broken tooth, there are a variety of ways to restore your looks and function. This information is presented to you so that you can be better informed about your healthcare decisions.



What are my options for restoring the look and function of my tooth?

Advances in dentistry have given us the ability to restore teeth with materials that are more esthetic, and in some cases stronger, than conventional metal-based restorations. And although silver amalgam fillings are very long-lasting, they contain mercury and thus we do not use them on our patients. *We only use white, metal-free restorations, including composite fillings, ceramic onlays, and crowns.*



Which material is best for my tooth?

We will always recommend the treatment we think is best for your situation, but the biggest factor on why we recommend one treatment over another is related to how big the issue is (or put another way, how much of your tooth is still intact):

- **Composite Filling** is the best material to correct small tooth issues, such as cavities, chips, or when trying to fill a gap between teeth. Also known as “bonding” or “resin” fillings, composite is a high-tech plastic putty that is placed into your tooth, shaped, and hardened in-place. Composite restorations can last 5-15 years, or more, but can be prone to slight staining and chipping over time. *Composite is best when the issue with the tooth takes up less than a third of the chewing surface.*
- **Onlays** are the preferred option for medium sized tooth issues. Made from a solid block of ceramic that is then custom shaped and fit to your tooth, onlays are more durable than fillings and can handle greater chewing pressures. Like composite fillings, they can be done in one visit, and are *ideal when the issue with the tooth involves more than half of the chewing surface*, especially if one of the tooth cusps is broken or cracked. The typical lifespan of an onlay is 10-20 years.
- **Crowns** are the most durable way to restore a tooth, and is the material of choice for any tooth that needs maximum strength. And the newest generation of crowns are the best-looking we’ve ever had in dentistry, while also being nearly unbreakable. But as good as they are, crowns are also the most invasive option, and are thus reserved for *when the issue with the tooth takes up most of the chewing surface*. A well-fitting crown can last 20-30+ years or more.

There are other factors not discussed here. This is only a preliminary information sheet that does not consider any of the variables that make you unique. Restoration longevity estimates are accurate only if you are brushing and flossing thoroughly and regularly, and there are exceptions. Be sure to discuss any questions you may have about your situation with your doctor.