

# Dental amalgam beneficence - *first do no harm* -

G. Scott Crowther, PE  
P.O. Box 110854  
Anchorage, Alaska 99511  
Email: crowther@alaska.net

---

## Abstract

Dental amalgam restorations typically consist of 50% mercury, 35% silver, 13% tin, 2% copper, and a trace of zinc. Today, there is a growing body of scientific research that indicates the dose of mercury released by the amalgam causes harm to every exposed person and developing fetus. Therefore, it is reasonable and conservative to believe that the dose of mercury released from an amalgam is a poison.

Because amalgam constituents are substantially equivalent to devices that existed in interstate commerce prior to the May 28, 1976 enactment of the Medical Device Amendments in the United States, the federal Food and Drug Administration permits them to be marketed under regulatory controls. State dental boards commonly adopt the American Dental Association's *Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct* (ADA Code) as an ethical standard for all dentists in their state. The ADA Code does not address some aspects of classical biomedical ethics and it contains a veracity aspect. Their combined effect: (1) discourages amalgam removal for health reasons, and (2) in a circuitous way, allows for amalgam installation.

To discourage the amalgam and other products like it from entering the market place, state policies or statutes that allow for dental restoration removal for health reasons are needed. The policies or statutes need to allow for aspects of autonomy, beneficence, and justice that are not addressed by the present ADA Code. The suggested policy or statute will inspire enterprise and result in a phase out and eventually the ban of the amalgam and amalgam-like products from entering the market place.

© Copyright 2007 Pearblossom Private School, Inc.—Publishing Division. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* dental, amalgam, ethics, mercury, government, policy, statute.

---