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[Mercury Dental Fillings: What You Need to Know](#)

Do you need to change your old fillings? A new Pennsylvania law requires dentists tell you that the fillings you get could contain mercury. Freya Koss, Director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry and Donald Robbins, DDS appeared on Good Day Philadelphia to discuss the impact, particularly on low-income people. http://www.myfoxphilly.com/dpp/about_us/Mercury_Dental_Fillings_What_You_Need_to_Know

KYW 1060

<http://www.kyw1060.com/pages/2179481.php>

Media coverage "Right To Know" protest and press conference May 13, 2008. KYW Newsradio



Posted: Tuesday, 13 May 2008 3:22PM

Group Wants Strong Warnings on Phila. Dental Brochures

by KYW's John Ostapovich

Here's something to chew on: the battle over silver amalgam dental fillings, and how to talk about them.

About dozen activists, some claiming to have suffered severe illnesses from mercury in the filling mixture, want tough wording in an informed consent brochure dentists in Philadelphia will soon be required to have their patients sign.

Freya Koss (second from right in photo) is director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry:

"Up until now, patients have been told that silver fillings are silver fillings. They're not silver fillings. They are 50 percent mercury, the second most toxic non-radioactive element on the face of this earth."

But Sean Connelly of the Pennsylvania Dental Association says this formula has been used for 100 years:

"Dental amalgam is a mix of several alloys and it has been shown to be very safe, durable, and effective."

This wording is certainly less alarming, and now the city health department has to determine the brochure's approach.

(Photo by KYW's **John Ostapkovich**)



Inside Today's Bulletin

Philly First In The Nation To Require Mercury Disclosures

By: JENNY DeHUFF, The Bulletin

05/14/2008

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Philadelphia - Freya Koss said she developed multiple sclerosis, lupus and other health problems from a silver dental filling containing mercury. She and several other consumer advocates and health professionals were at City Hall yesterday to tell their stories of cavity fillings gone wrong.

The Pennsylvania Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry and Consumers for Dental Choice (CDC) Advertisement stood in front of large signs warning of the dangers of silver amalgam fillings - most notable for their high levels of the neurotoxin mercury.

In December, Philadelphia City Council unanimously passed legislation backed by Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown that requires dentists to distribute patient brochures disclosing the dangers of silver amalgam fillings.

"The textbooks don't tell us this," said Charlie Brown, spokesman for the CDC. "It is absurd to think nothing is damaged when a neurotoxin is placed an inch from someone's brain."

"I quickly learned of the harrowing effects of mercury when an old filling was removed and a silver filling replaced it," said Ms. Koss, director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry. "Seven days later, I got sick."

Don Robbins operates a mercury-free dentist practice out of Exton. He called himself one of the few dentists committed to informing patients of the risk of silver amalgam fillings. Holding a jar of dental mercury filling, Mr. Robbins pointed out the skull and crossbones icon on the label, warning that the substance is hazardous to children and to handle the container with gloves and protective gear.

"It's deeply disturbing what's going on in our profession," Mr. Robbins said. "Less than 60 percent of dentists in the U.S. belong to the American Dental Association (ADA). Silver fillings are 50 percent mercury. If you have two, three or more silver fillings, you are above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) limit for mercury intake."

Earlier in the day, consumers protested statements made by the president of the Pennsylvania Dental Association. "No dentist places mercury in a patient's mouth," he was reported to have said.

The alternatives to these types of fillings are typically white composite resin fillings, which are more commonly used today but don't last as long as silver fillings.

Jenny DeHuff can be reached at jdehuff@thebulletin.us.

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HEALTHY LIVING

Wynnewood Advocate Wins Battle

Philadelphia First City to Adopt Law Requiring Informed Consent Before Dentists Use Mercury Amalgam



Freya Koss with Congressman Dan Burton at Hearings in Washington, DC in 2005.

After a four-year battle, Philadelphia is the first city to adopt a law requiring dentists to disclose to their patients that silver/amalgam fillings are actually 50% mercury, that dental mercury exposure poses health and environmental risks, and non-mercury alternatives exist. The cause was led by Freya Koss of Wynnewood, founder of the PA Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry. She assembled a grassroots team, worked with city government and Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown who sponsored the law. A unanimous vote on December 13, 2007 passed the law giving all Philadelphians the “right to know” and

choice. A similar state bill calling for informed consent brochures has been introduced by Montgomery County Rep. Daylin Leach.

The law calls for the Philadelphia Dept. of Public Health to draft a brochure to be distributed by dentists to their patients informing of the health risks and disadvantages of amalgam fillings. Koss is hopeful that fact sheet will be scientifically factual offering truthful information so that consumers can make informed decisions about their dental care, pointing to the World Health Organization’s conclusion that dental amalgam fillings contribute more mercury to a person’s body than all other sources of mercury combined. Donald Robbins, DMD, a biologic Exton dentist encourages warnings for pregnant women stating: “Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that mercury in the tissues of the fetus or infant correlates significantly with the number of dental amalgam fillings in the mother.”

“The consumer protection law written by Blondell Reynolds Brown will help thousands of Philadelphia families to bring awareness that silver fillings are mainly mercury and pose a serious health risk. What pregnant woman or parent would want their unborn baby or child exposed to mercury?” warns Charlie Brown, National Counsel to Consumers for Dental Choice.

Consumers for Dental Choice, a national grass-roots organization committed to bringing public awareness and legislative change concerning the dangers of amalgam dental fillings awarded Freya, in 2007, the “Advocate of the Decade.” The organization noted that Freya’s leadership, determination and perseverance, working at every level of government, in every region and with every constituency, helped to turn the tide against mercury fillings.

For more information about the bill and how you can protect yourself against mercury exposure from amalgam fillings and the risks of amalgam fillings, contact Freya Koss, frekoss@aol.com, www.toxicteeth.org.

ABC News

<http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/health&id=6140088>

May 27, 2008

City says dentists must tell patients of options

Ayana Jones
Tribune Staff Writer

Philadelphia is the first city in the nation to pass a law requiring informed consent before dentists place amalgam (silver) fillings in their patients' mouths.

After a four-year battle, City Council has passed a bill mandating that dentists distribute a patient brochure stating the potential health hazards of amalgam fillings and listing various alternatives.

Amalgam fillings have been used for about 150 years to restore teeth. They contain a mixture of metals such as silver, copper and tin, plus mercury that chemically binds these components into an alloy.

The continued use of dental amalgam has been controversial as some advocacy organizations claim mercury exposure is linked to chronic illnesses.

Freya Koss, director of Pennsylvania Coalition for Mercury-Free Dentistry, said she became seriously ill after receiving an amalgam filling back in 1998.

She was struck with double vision and diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, lupus and myasthenia gravis. She learned that she had been mercury poisoned by improper removal and placement of an amalgam filling just seven days prior to the onset of her neurological symptoms.

"What I hadn't been told by my dentist was the fact that silver fillings were actually 50 percent mercury, a known neurotoxin," Koss said. "If had been informed by my dentist that commonly used silver fillings were half mercury, the second most toxic non-radioactive element on the face of this Earth, I would not have permitted it to be placed in my mouth."

Karen Palmer, who spent 25 years as a dental assistant, said she sustained neurological damage due to breathing in chronic mercury vapor in the workplace.

Throughout the years, she wore face masks, but said she was still exposed to the vapors and was diagnosed with heavy metal toxicity.

"I was always told that it wasn't a problem unless you are allergic," she said of working in an office where mercury was used.

The coalition said mercury escapes from dental amalgams throughout the lifetime of the filling and is absorbed into the bloodstream when the mercury vapors are inhaled.

The organization also points out that infants and young children are vulnerable to because studies have shown a connection between mercury and learning disabilities and neurological impairment.

Spearheaded by Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown, the legislation called for the brochure to be drafted by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health in cooperation with Consumers for Dental Choice, the Pennsylvania Dental Association and the New Era Dental Society.

"It is acceptable to inform patients of the materials that will be used in their mouths. It will not only educate them on the safety of amalgam, but pros and cons of its usage. A well educated patient is a good patient. However, we are aware that it will increase the costs," said New Era Dental Society President Elise M. Casimir in an e-mailed statement.

Meanwhile Sean Connolly of the Pennsylvania Dental Association says the dentists insist that the brochure must be scientifically factual.

"The anti-amalgam activists are trying to eliminate the patients' option for treatment, and that's a decision that needs to be made between a dentist and a patient, not an activist group that is using false and misleading information as scare tactics," Connolly said.

The controversy over the safety of dental amalgam has led some dentists to forgo the practice of using it.

Don Robbins, a mercury-free dentist and member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, noted that people with multiple silver fillings are above the Environmental Protection Agency's health limit for mercury exposure and could have health problems.

However, the American Dental Association contends that dental amalgam is a safe choice for patients and that studies have found no links between the fillings and any medical disorder.

Amalgam is widely preferred by dentists because it is less expensive and easier and faster to use than other restorative materials.

Some alternatives are white composite fillings, ceramic dental materials and gold or base metal alloys.

"If it is mandated that amalgam can no longer be used, patients will have the financial burden of paying a higher cost ...We feel that because the economy is hard as it is, the extra cost will be even more burdensome," Casimir said.

The city joins California, Maine and New Hampshire in passing laws requiring informed consent for dental patients.

State Rep. Daylin Leach has introduced legislation to create a patient notification brochure that must be read by all Pennsylvania residents before they receive fillings with amalgam.