

It's time to reconsider the way you handle amalgam.

You already know amalgam contains mercury. What you may not realize is that amalgam releases elemental mercury when it is incinerated. Vaporized mercury then settles on land and water. Because mercury doesn't ever break down, it bioaccumulates in the environment and causes health problems throughout the food chain.

By taking preventive action now, Minnesota dentists can help restore the health of our environment. The solution is both cost effective and simple. The answer is an amalgam separator.

Chairside traps collect the large chunks of amalgam when restorations are placed or removed, or approximately half of the amalgam generated. Chairside traps combined with a vacuum filter remove even more - up to approximately three-fourths of the amalgam generated. With the installation of an approved separator, dentists can prevent 99% of their amalgam waste from entering the office wastewater and contributing to the accumulations of mercury in our lakes and streams.

Amalgam waste that is captured can be processed by a recycling facility to recover mercury safely. However, if dentists don't capture amalgam waste, it ends up in wastewater treatment plant sludge that is incinerated or applied to fields where our food is grown. Dentists have already taken steps to capture amalgam in the dental office through the use of best management practices. But we need to do more. As an example, we can look to the voluntary, cooperative program in the Duluth area, where dentists have installed amalgam separators to reduce the amalgam and mercury discharge into Lake Superior. Now dentists throughout all of Minnesota have the opportunity to be proactive environmental stewards.

The Minnesota Dental Association strongly recommends that you install an approved amalgam separator. It is a reasonable, cost-effective way for Minnesota dentists to stop contributing mercury to our lakes and streams. It's the right thing to do - for your practice, the community, and the environment.

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TIME TO DO IT."
JAMES WESTMAN, DDS