

## How Best To Treat a Filling Gone Bad

As you may have already experienced, fillings in your teeth can get worn out, chipped, or cracked. What's the problem with having some nicks and dents in a tooth? They can create tiny openings where bits of food and bacteria hide and, over time, cause tooth decay.

Dentists have thought that replacing, instead of repairing, fillings gone bad is better for the patient. **But a new study has found that repairing a filling is often a good choice, compared to replacing it.** That's good news for you because repairs under the right circumstances may be quicker and less expensive than replacements.



Your dentist is part of the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network, a group of dental practices that treat patients and also do dental research. For more information go to [www.nationaldentalpbrn.org](http://www.nationaldentalpbrn.org).



### Why repairing a filling can be a good option

- Compared to replacing fillings, repairing them often lasts about the same amount of time and causes less damage and stress to the rest of the tooth, the study found.
- The study did not show that it's always better to repair a bad filling than replace it, but it did show that dentists should **consider** repairing versus replacing more often than they now do.
- A thorough examination, which may include x-rays of your teeth, helps your dentist find problems before the filling fails or you get that tell-tale toothache.
- *Your dentist will decide on the best treatment for you. Every patient and tooth is different!*



### More about the study

Dentists participating in the study repaired one-fourth of the thousands of worn out or damaged fillings they examined as part of the study, and they replaced the rest. After one year, most of the repaired and new fillings were fine. Only 5 percent of the replaced and 7 percent of the repaired ones needed follow-up care—and the new fillings needed more work to fix than the repaired fillings did.



### Why do some fillings go bad sooner than others?

Daily activities, like eating or clenching your teeth, gradually wear out your fillings. Here's what else can affect how long your fillings last:

- The material used to fill your cavity
- The type and size of the cavity
- How well you care for your teeth and gums—your oral health
- Your overall risk for cavities.