



Direct Fillings: Composite

What it is:

A composite filling, also called a plastic or tooth-colored filling, is made of tooth-colored resins. It is durable, resistant to fractures and blends in well with natural teeth. Placing a composite filling is more time-intensive than placing an amalgam, so composites are typically more expensive. Because they're tooth-colored, and amalgams are good functional alternatives for molar teeth, composites are sometimes considered a cosmetic procedure and may not be covered by insurance at the same level as amalgam. Composite fillings can be placed in one appointment.



Why you would get it:

The tooth color of a composite filling makes it a good fit for cavities that are in noticeable places such as front teeth. Composites can also work well in molar teeth but may not be as durable when large fillings are needed in heavy chewing areas.

How it works:

Step 1

The area will be numbed and the decay will be cleaned out. The area must remain extremely dry, so a suction tool is used to remove saliva during the procedure.



Decaying tooth



Decay removed

How it works (continued):

Step 2

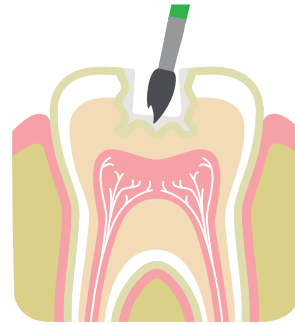
Your dentist will etch (roughen) the inside of the prepared tooth with a weak acid (similar to the acid in soda) to help the composite filling stick.



Roughened tooth

Step 3

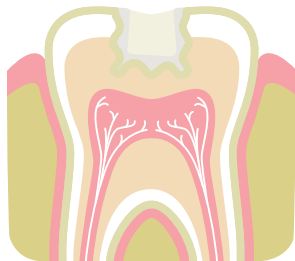
The roughened surface will be coated with a thin bonding material.



Thin bonding material

Step 4

The hole will be filled with a composite material, which bonds directly to your tooth.



Filling with composite material

Step 5

Your dentist will use a special light to harden the composite material. If the hole is deep, the dentist may repeat steps 4 and 5 to apply the composite in layers.



Hardening filling

Step 6

Your dentist will check your bite to ensure the new filling feels comfortable. You may have to bite down on carbon paper, which leaves behind colored marks to help your dentist see where the filling is too high. He or she will smooth out any rough or high spots before you leave.