



# Amalgam Tattoo

## What is an amalgam tattoo?

Amalgam tattoo is a fairly common benign pigmented condition of the mouth. It is caused by deposition of amalgam (silver filling) particles in the tissue and is painless, bluish-gray or black and flat. The most common location is the gums next to a filling (or a space where a tooth was extracted), but it can also appear at a site not related to any fillings such as the inside of the cheeks, lips, tongue and roof of the mouth.

## What causes an amalgam tattoo?

Amalgam fillings contain mercury, silver, tin, and copper, giving the filling its metallic color. The most frequent way that amalgam particles are introduced into the tissues is during placement or removal of an amalgam filling. During extractions, pieces of the filling may accidentally fall into and lodge in the socket of the tooth. Amalgam may also be used in surgery performed after root canal therapy and this may show up around the surgical scar.

## How do we know it is an amalgam tattoo?

Your doctor can usually make the diagnosis of an amalgam tattoo simply based on your dental history and the way it looks. Sometimes, a dental radiograph may show the metal particles if they are large. In rare cases, a biopsy may be necessary such as if the lesion appears suddenly, if it is not in the vicinity of a restored tooth, or if there has been a change in size, shape or color.

## How do we treat an amalgam tattoo?

Amalgam tattoos are completely benign and do not require any treatment. However, if the lesion is on the lip and the appearance of it bothers you, it may be removed.

## What to expect?

Amalgam tattoo is a benign condition that does not typically change in size, color or shape. If not removed, it will remain in your mouth permanently.

