

Filling Us In

Many patients today who are looking for cosmetically attractive, strong, natural teeth are choosing composite fillings over amalgam fillings; some are even having their amalgam fillings replaced.

STEPHEN G. BLANK, DDS

Carole says that she feels 100 percent better since having her amalgam fillings replaced with composite fillings.



FHCN PHOTO BY BRIAN GLENN

Carole Favata says she wanted to be metal free. “I was having symptoms I had never had before in my life,” describes the thirty-nine-year-old. “I became irritable. My memory and concentration were declining and I had weight gain, joint pain, and unexplained allergies, but the most significant symptom was fatigue. I just didn’t feel like I should for my age anymore.”

Carole says she has been seeing Stefan Flink, DC, for the past ten years: “Dr. Flink takes a holistic approach in his practice and because I was very toxic, he was helping me figure out why I was experiencing these symptoms.

“I told him that eight years ago, when I wore metal braces, my mouth constantly had a metallic taste. Although that diminished once the braces were removed, it was never completely resolved.

“Because at that point I still had metal in my mouth in the form of seven amalgam fillings, some of which were twenty-eight years old, I discussed the possible toxicity* of them with Dr. Flink. He said there was a dentist in the area who is known for removal of amalgam fillings, and referred me to Dr. Blank.”

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie.

“When Carole came in to see me, she said her goal was to remove all silver fillings and to have strong, natural teeth with good integrity,” remembers Dr. Blank. “Her goal fit in with my philosophy.”

Dr. Blank says his practice decided to go amalgam free several years ago because, now that tooth-colored composite fillings are available, his patients simply no longer wanted the dark amalgam fillings.

“Along with the obvious cosmetic benefit of composite fillings, amalgam fillings also usually require more drilling than composite fillings,” educates Dr. Blank. “Amalgam fillings do not adhere to tooth surfaces so in order for the filling to stay in place, we have to drill undercuts in the healthy tooth to keep the filling from falling out. Composite fillings, in contrast, bond to tooth surfaces and, consequently, do not require as much drilling. Therefore, our patient tends to retain more of the healthy tooth.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Replacing dental fillings

Old fillings do not last forever.

“The old amalgam fillings that darken teeth with age have a lifespan,” observes Dr. Blank. “Because amalgam fillings deform over time under function, they can contribute to tooth cracking.

“Additionally, as they age, their surface changes texture and shape so the filling is no longer in the same condition as when it was new. Particularly if the filling is wide, it can weaken the tooth. If the filling has a flat anatomy, it takes significantly more force to chew through a piece of food than if it were a sharp tooth, so the tooth is taking a beating every time it bites down. Even though the filling may be serving the patient today, the tooth is becoming more and more at risk. The patient simply isn’t aware of it.”

That is where Dr. Blank’s intraoral video camera tour comes in.

“All of our new patients receive tours of their mouths with a close-up camera so they can see the condition of their teeth on a computer screen,” informs Dr. Blank. “For many patients this means observing where the edges that were once nice and smooth no longer are. It might also expose openings where black stains are spreading away from the filling, at which point we know something is going on underneath.

“Because amalgam fillings are metal, x-rays don’t go through them so early decay doesn’t always show up. Examination requires not just x-rays but also the dentist checking the tooth in the mouth. If decay is discovered, it is a good time to replace the filling.”

In Dr. Blank’s practice, amalgam fillings are removed carefully and safely. Carole scheduled her fillings to be removed, two at a time, beginning in August of 2008.

“Amalgam fillings are composed of silver, mercury, copper, tin, and zinc,” reviews Dr. Blank, “so when the mixture is removed with a drill, the elements are available to fly into the air. That is why we use a high-speed suction system.”

As a good neighbor, Dr. Blank added a metal separator to their system in order to keep the heavy metals from moving into the county sewer system.

For Carole, Dr. Blank used an additional device called an Isolite suction system to provide a constant suction in her mouth while being very gentle on her gums. “We were able to remove all of Carole’s amalgam with a minimal amount of debris present,” assures Dr. Blank.

Excellent outcome

“Dr. Blank began removing my amalgam fillings in August and I was finished by October,” recounts Carole. “I feel one hundred percent better now. I feel like my old self again. My fatigue is gone; my energy is back.

“And Dr. Blank is wonderful. He is so professional, as well as charming, which is helpful when you are afraid of the dentist, like I am.

“I can’t help remembering when I was a child, going to the dentist ... the pain and the noise of the drill.

“But Dr. Blank has a great chair-side manner. I plan on staying with him because he is wonderful, and his hygienist is, too. She really takes the time to give you a thorough cleaning, to teach you how to clean and floss your teeth properly, and how to protect your gums from damage, which is something I was never really taught by any other hygienist.

“They’re the best.” **FHCN—Kris Kline**

*In 1990, CBS’s *60 Minutes* presented a segment on dental amalgam fillings that they entitled, “Is There Poison In Your Mouth?” Ever since then, the alleged danger of amalgam fillings has been a hotly debated issue within the field of dentistry. According to the American Dental Association, dental amalgam has been studied and reviewed extensively, has established a record of safety and effectiveness, and is considered a safe, affordable, and durable material.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Dr. Blank invites you to visit his website at www.PSLDENTIST.com

Gold Medal Winner

On September 29, 2007, Dr. Blank was awarded four gold medals at the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Annual Scientific Session competition, which is designed to reward excellence in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies, and he and his dental team have completed the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation program. Dr. Blank is a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, teaching dentists from all parts of the country in live hands-on courses on the various aspects of smile design, occlusion, full mouth reconstruction, and complete patient care. He is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.

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For that healthy smile

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call **(772) 878-7348**. His office is located at **184 NW Central Park Plaza** in Port St. Lucie.