

Mercury Can Cause *Imbalance*

Dr. C. Michael Willock, increasingly recognized as one of the area's leading holistic dentists, frequently sees patients who fear that the amalgam fillings in their mouths have the potential to cause serious health problems.

Typical of such cases was a woman in her early thirties who sought out Dr. Willock because she knew he was a holistic dentist.

"She told me she was in constant pain," he says, "and said she felt like her muscles were dying. She reported intense pressure in her head and an unrelenting fierce headache. She had been to a number of doctors seeking relief, and was still in agony.

"She asked me a simple question: did I think removing her amalgam fillings—half mercury, half other metals—might help her regain her health? She had done research on the Internet and had come to believe that she might be suffering from mercury toxicity.

"I repeated what I say to many patients: I have no way of knowing with certainty that removing amalgam fillings will help overcome health problems. At the same time, I believe one of the best things we can do is rid the body of as many known toxins as possible. That, of course, includes mercury—one of the most poisonous metals on earth—and other environmental toxins that may be around us such as pesticides, cleaning solvents, and mold that might cause a reaction in our bodies. When we rid ourselves of these substances, we can give our bodies a chance to heal and regain balance while providing proper nutrition."

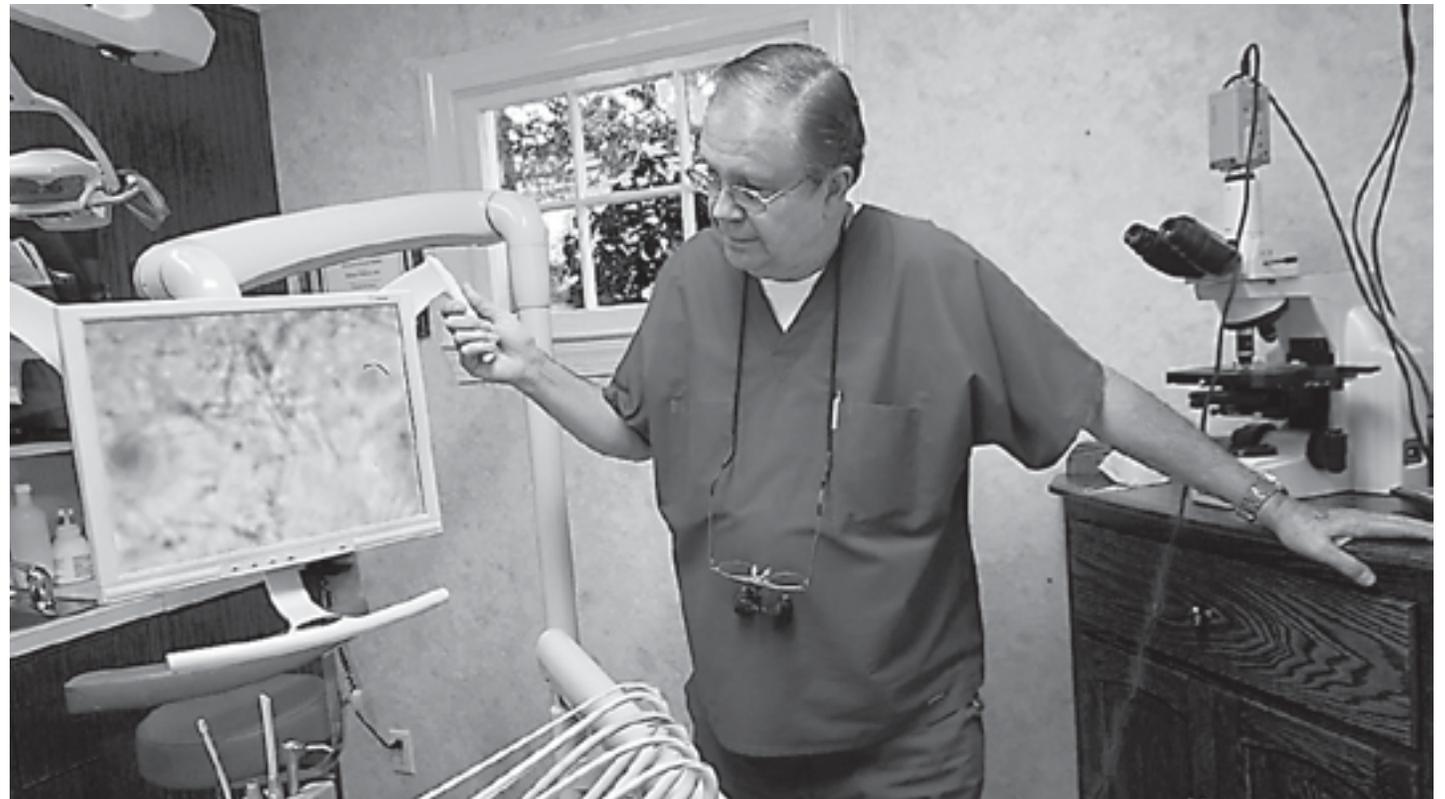
Determined to test her belief, this young woman, after consultation with her physician, proceeded to have Dr. Willock replace her silver-mercury fillings with ceramic, non-toxic material. "Within several months, we got the good news," says Dr. Willock. "The patient reported really impressive improvements in her health and sense of well-being. She said her muscles felt 85 percent back to normal, and she was overjoyed to wake up in the morning and be free of pain."

THE DENTIST'S EXPERIENCE

Dr. Willock himself has high sensitivity to mercury, and experienced a dramatic improvement in his own health after removal of metal from his mouth.

"That fact served to fuel my interest in holistic dentistry," he says, "which to me means understanding that the health of the mouth is linked to the health of all parts of the body.

"Growing up in Portland, Oregon, throughout my teenage years I was underweight and chronically tired. Our family doctor treated me for anemia, with very modest success. As I look back on my poor health and low energy in those years, I remember that every posterior tooth in my head had a two, three, or four-surface mercury amalgam in it. At the time, I made no connection between silver-mercury amalgam fillings and my health, and neither did anyone else.



As an education aid for patients, and to monitor progress in combating periodontal disease, Dr. Willock has set up a high-power microscope (rear, to his left) that projects what is found on a swab from a patient's mouth to the computer monitor. "Patients are often horrified at what they see that is resident in their mouths," he says with a smile. "The device is serving its purpose: people are brushing and flossing like never before."

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"Through the years, those teeth with amalgam fillings began to crack up, leak and break down which led to more extensive restorations including crowns over a fairly long period, and in the process the amalgams had to be removed. Later, as I went through dental school and into private practice, I began to better understand the physics of dental amalgam and its effects on human physiology.

"Over the years of continually stressing the teeth by chewing and thermal cycling, there's an accordion effect that eventually cracks the teeth. Amalgam—principally made up of mercury and silver—gets brittle, and from the day it is placed, it begins to leak because it does not bond to the tooth, but is rather a tight 'press fit.' Mercury and silver are positive ions that repel each other, like two common poles of a magnet, creating outgassing.

"Now we have superior materials to place in teeth, such as composite resins and ceramics which do bond to the tooth and seal it much better. In terms of my own health, I believe it is greatly improved because all of the mercury contained in

amalgam fillings has been removed from my mouth. Some people are more sensitive than others to the toxic effects of mercury leakage—and clearly I am one of those people. And in fact, many people have a genetic predisposition for sensitivity to mercury and other heavy metals."

PREVENTIVE MEASURE?

Dr. Willock is increasingly asked by patients to replace old amalgam fillings as a preventive measure with newer, safer materials that seal better. "I tell these patients that removing amalgam is a significant health event, with the potential of exacerbating the toxicity problem if it is not done properly and with great care," he says. A member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (www.IAOMT.org), Dr. Willock is one of the few dentists in the area who has had extensive training in the safe removal of amalgam fillings. There are many physicians, dentists and PhDs who are members of this organization.

"Many people have various autoimmune diseases and have many mercury

amalgams in their mouth and if we suspect a causal connection we ask them to visit their physician to be tested for heavy metal toxicity. If the results are positive, the physician may recommend that the fillings be removed and then engage in a detox plan with the patient."

He also points out that there is a problem with amalgam in terms of expansion and contraction with temperature changes in food. "Actually, with temperature changes, amalgam expands and contracts almost three times the rate of natural tooth structure and this is one of the main causes of tooth fracture," he says. *h&h*

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