



## **Banned on the Continent & Ireland, toxic mercury does not merit Stormont Brake**

Mercury is used in dental amalgam, a filling material that is approximately 50% mercury. Recognizing that the amalgam era is over in dentistry, the European Union has taken the step to ban amalgam use and amalgam exports on 1.1.2025. This landmark action is good for the environment, good for consumer health, good for dental worker safety—and good for dentistry!

### **1. Dental amalgam pollutes our air, water, and land:**

Dental amalgam is the largest remaining intentional use of mercury in the Union and the UK.<sup>1</sup> Much of this dental mercury enters the environment via many unsound pathways, polluting (1) air via cremation, dental clinic emissions, and sludge incineration; (2) water via dental clinic releases and human waste; and (3) soil via landfills, burials, and fertilizer.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many people are exposed to a double dose of amalgam’s mercury: first when it is implanted in their teeth and a second time when it contaminates their environment and the fish they eat.

### **2. Mercury-free alternatives are available, effective, and affordable:** As the European Commission explained in its 2023 proposal to ban amalgam:

“Considering the availability of mercury-free alternatives, it is appropriate to prohibit the use of dental amalgam for dental treatment of all members of the population...”<sup>3</sup> Studies show mercury-free composite fillings can last as long as – and even longer than – amalgam.<sup>4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</sup> Mercury-free fillings also offer both health and cost-saving advantages over amalgam. First, mercury-free fillings preserve tooth structure that must be removed to place an amalgam filling, which can increase the longevity of the tooth itself.<sup>12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22</sup> Second, mercury-free fillings can help prevent future caries.<sup>23,24,25</sup> Third, composite can be easier to repair than amalgam.<sup>26,27,28</sup> Additionally, mercury-free alternatives eliminate the high environmental costs of amalgam (studies show that after environmental costs are factored in, amalgam is more expensive than composite).<sup>29,30</sup>

3. **The global trend is towards phasing out dental amalgam:** 34 countries worldwide have already banned the use of dental amalgam, declared no longer to use it or replaced it in the public health system, demonstrating that alternatives are effective, available and affordable. No adverse clinical effects were reported. By January 2025, this number will rise to 56 countries.<sup>31</sup>

Dental amalgam is a primitive tooth unfriendly device from the Georgian Era, far surpassed by the tooth friendly, non-polluting, cavity-fighting alternatives. Having been soundly defeated in Brussels, the dental mercury lobby is targeting the consumers of Northern Ireland to offload this 19<sup>th</sup> century relic—but one that poisons the fish children eat, and poisons the air during cremation.

The worst choice to propose a Stormont Brake is for a toxic product—like dental amalgam. **We urge the NI Legislative Assembly to reject the pressure to bring dental mercury into Northern Ireland.**

The undersigned:

15 April 2024

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Charles Gailey Brown, President, World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on mercury as regards dental amalgam and other mercury-added products subject to manufacturing, import and export restrictions*  
<sup>2</sup>Concorde East West, *The Real Cost of Dental Mercury* (March 2012), [http://www.zeromercury.org/index.php?option=com\\_phocadownload&view=file&id=158%3Athe-real-cost-of-dental-mercury&Itemid=70](http://www.zeromercury.org/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=file&id=158%3Athe-real-cost-of-dental-mercury&Itemid=70)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on mercury as regards dental amalgam and other mercury-added products subject to manufacturing, import and export restrictions*

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