

Fillings

What is a filling and how are they done?

A filling is used to restore a tooth affected by decay, weakened enamel, a break or chip, or the need to replace an older filling. During the procedure, dental decay is removed, and a white filling is placed to restore the tooth's function and appearance.

Why do we do fillings on baby teeth?

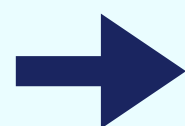
Baby teeth play a crucial role in keeping the space for adult teeth, as well as aiding in eating and speaking. Baby molars don't usually get wiggly until around 10 to 12 years old. There are various types of fillings and techniques, and your dental or oral health therapist will explain the best option for your child's needs.

What to expect during a filling

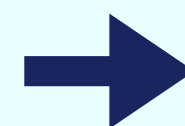
- 1. Numbing the Area:** The area around the tooth is numbed using a gel, followed by local anaesthetic administered with a small needle. This puts the tooth and surrounding area to sleep, which may feel like a scratch and then pins and needles around the lip. Sometimes a filling may not be painful, so won't require an injection.
- 2. Cleaning the Tooth:** Once numb, the dental decay is carefully removed using specialised instruments. This process may be noisy and involves water to wash away the decay.
- 3. Preparing the tooth:** The prepared tooth is ready for the filling. Sometimes, a small band is placed around the tooth to hold the filling in place, which might feel tight around the tooth.
- 4. Placing the Filling:** The tooth coloured filling material, resembling toothpaste, is applied to the tooth in layers and hardened using a blue UV light.
- 5. Final Check and Polish:** Once the filling is in place, it's just a final check and polish of the tooth before it's finished!



Tooth with dental decay



Tooth prepared for filling with decay removed



Filling placed and finished

After a filling

- If the tooth was numbed, please remind your child to be careful not to bite, suck or poke the area until the numbness wears off, which may take a few hours.
- Initially, the filled tooth may feel different, but it should feel normal by the end of the day.
- Fillings may need to be replaced over time and will be checked at your child's yearly dental exam to ensure they remain intact and functional.

For information about free dental care for under 18s:

Visit: www.HealthNZ.govt.nz/BeeHealthy Call: 0800 TALK TEETH (0800 825 583)

This resource is available from HealthEd.govt.nz HE1264 April 2026