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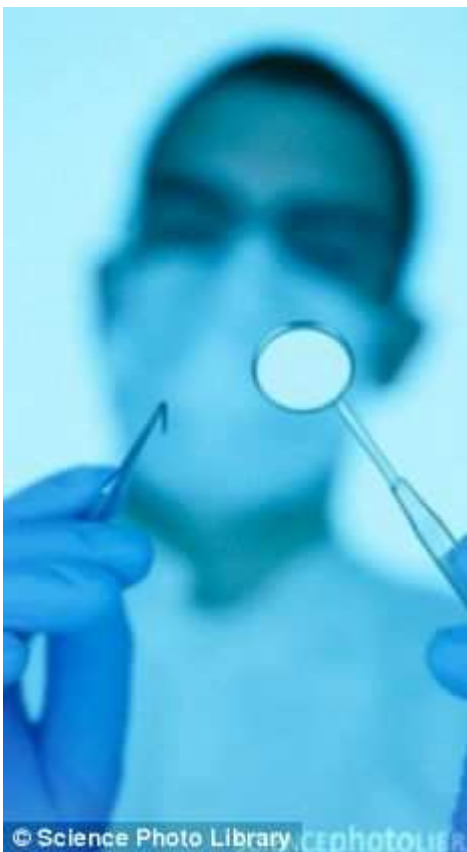
MailOnline

health

Mercury fillings ARE dangerous say regulators - but British health bosses still refuse to take action

By Sam Greenhill

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Mercury fillings can be dangerous, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Mercury fillings given to millions of Britons every year can be dangerous, the world's biggest health regulator has warned.

Simply chewing could release harmful mercury vapour from the fillings which could be breathed into the lungs, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said.

The regulator had previously advised U.S. dentists that the fillings are safe.

Despite the warning, the British Department of Health issued its own statement yesterday that it continued to believe mercury fillings posed no danger.

Patients in Britain have about eight million mercury fillings a year, a million of which are in children and young adults.

Campaigners blame the highly toxic mercury found in amalgam fillings for a range of ailments.

These include fatigue, depression heart conditions and Alzheimer's disease.

Earlier this month, the U.S. regulator dropped much of its reassuring language on the fillings from its website.

Instead it now says: 'Dental amalgams contain mercury, which may have neurotoxic effects on the nervous systems of developing children and foetuses.'

It adds that mercury vapour is released when amalgam fillings are placed or removed, and during the chewing of food.

The FDA is now carrying out an urgent review of its rules and may end up banning mercury fillings.

Norway and Denmark banned mercury from fillings earlier this year while Finland and Japan have severe restrictions.

More than half of an amalgam filling is made up of mercury, which is more poisonous than lead.

It is mixed with silver, copper and tin, forming a highly durable combination to lock in the mercury.

But it is now accepted that mercury vapour escapes and small amounts are passed into the bloodstream and organs.

Some research suggests that this could be linked to high blood pressure, infertility, and disorders of the central nervous system.

Dentists themselves have been found to have high levels of mercury in their bodies and 500 practices in Britain refuse to offer mercury fillings.



Other evidence indicates mercury is safe.

A study of Portuguese and U.S. children found no difference in the rates of neurological symptoms between those with amalgam and those with mercury-free fillings.

Alternatives such as white fillings or glass resin composites cost more and some say are not as

strong.

The Department of Health said the number of amalgam fillings in England and Wales had decreased by 15 per cent in the last year for which figures were available, 2004/2005.

A spokesman said: 'These fillings are a safe, durable and affordable cavity choice for dental patients that do not pose a health risk.'

This was supported by the British Dental Association, which said the FDA's decision was consistent with advice given to pregnant women in the UK to avoid dental 'intervention'.

Find this story at www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1030417/Mercury-fillings-ARE-dangerous-say-regulators--British-health-bosses-refuse-action.html

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