

Amalgam at Dental Offices

Amalgam Waste Defined

American National Standards Institute/American Dental Association (ANSI/ADA) Standard No. 109 defines amalgam waste as including amalgam (scrap), chair-side trap filters containing amalgam, vacuum pump filters containing amalgam, saliva ejectors if used in dental procedures involving amalgam, used amalgam capsules, extracted teeth with amalgam restorations, and waste items that are contaminated with amalgam.¹

Amalgam Recycling Rule Flowchart

To help determine if your practice is required to install an amalgam separator or to find out which documentation may be required still, please view the American Dental Association's (ADA) flowchart here: [EPA Amalgam Recycling Rule.pdf](#)

Best Management Practices for Amalgam Waste²

Do	Don't
Do use precapsulated alloys and stock a variety of capsule sizes	Don't use bulk mercury
Do recycle used disposable amalgam capsules	Don't put used disposable amalgam capsules in biohazard containers
Do salvage, store, and recycle non-contact (scrap) amalgam	Don't put non-contact amalgam waste in biohazard containers, infectious waste containers (red bags), or regular garbage
Do salvage (contact) amalgam pieces from restorations after removal and recycle their contents	Don't put contact amalgam waste in biohazard containers, infectious waste containers (red bags), or regular garbage
Do use chair-side traps, vacuum pump filters, and amalgam separators to retain amalgam and recycle their contents	Don't rinse devices containing amalgam over drains or sinks
Do recycle teeth that contain amalgam restorations (Note: Ask your recycler whether extracted teeth with amalgam restorations require disinfection)	Don't dispose of extracted teeth that contain amalgam restorations in biohazard containers, infectious waste containers (red bags), sharps containers, or regular garbage
Do manage amalgam waste through recycling as much as possible	Don't flush amalgam waste down the drain or toilet
Do use line cleaners that minimize dissolution of amalgam	Don't use bleach or chlorine-containing cleaners to flush wastewater lines

To view a list of best management practices for amalgam waste, distributed by the California Dental Association (CDA), please visit: [CDA Best Management Practices for Amalgam Waste .pdf](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For a list of frequently asked questions compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), please click: [EPA's FAQs on Dental Office Category Rule November 2017.pdf](#)

For additional frequently asked questions on amalgam recycling and amalgam separators, please visit: <https://success.ada.org/en/regulatory-legal/amalgam/faq-amalgam>

Additional Resources

For more information and links to helpful resources, provided by the ADA Center for Professional Success, please visit: <https://success.ada.org/en/regulatory-legal/amalgam>

References

1. American National Standards Institute/American Dental Association. Procedures for Storing Dental Amalgam Waste and Requirements for Amalgam Waste Storage/Shipments Containers. Chicago, IL; 2006 (reaffirmed 2012).
2. American Dental Association. [Best management practices for amalgam waste](#). October 2007. Accessed July 15, 2020.