



## POST-OPERATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS

### *Tooth-Colored (Composite) Filling*

You have just received a tooth-colored composite resin filling. Unlike older silver (amalgam) fillings, composite fillings bond directly to your tooth and are fully set by the time you leave our office. Please follow these instructions to protect your new restoration and ensure a comfortable recovery.

### WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER TREATMENT

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It is normal to experience some or all of the following:

- Tooth sensitivity to hot, cold, sweet, or pressure for a few days up to 2–4 weeks
- Soreness or tenderness in the gum tissue around the treated tooth for 2–3 days
- Slight discomfort when biting, especially in the first day or two
- Numbness or tingling in the lips, cheek, or tongue until the anesthetic wears off (1–3 hours)

### EATING & DRINKING

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- Wait until the numbness (2-3 hrs) has completely worn off before eating to avoid accidentally biting your cheek, lip, or tongue.
- Your composite filling is fully hardened when you leave — there is no waiting period before chewing on it.
- Avoid very hard or sticky foods (ice, hard candy, caramel, gum) for 24 hours and use caution long-term, as these can crack or dislodge a filling.
- Minimize foods and beverages that stain (coffee, tea, red wine, berries) for the first 48 hours — composite can absorb color while the surface is still maturing.
- Avoid very hot or very cold foods and beverages if you are experiencing sensitivity.

### PAIN & DISCOMFORT MANAGEMENT

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- Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®) taken as directed are effective for most patients.
- Sensitivity toothpaste (Sensodyne® or similar) can help reduce temperature sensitivity — use it in place of your regular toothpaste.
- Avoid extremely hot, cold, or sweet foods and beverages until sensitivity resolves.
- If sensitivity is severe, worsening after the first week, or not improving after 4 weeks, contact our office — adjustment may be needed.

### BITE & OCCLUSION

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A high or uneven bite is one of the most common causes of post-filling discomfort. Please check the following:

- When you bite down, your teeth should come together evenly and comfortably. If your filling feels too high or uneven, call us — this is a quick, painless adjustment.
- Do not wait and hope it will go away on its own. An uneven bite can cause significant tooth pain and sensitivity if left uncorrected.
- Numbness after your appointment can make it difficult to assess your bite accurately. If something feels "off" once feeling returns, contact us right away.

## ORAL HYGIENE

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**You may brush and floss normally starting today. Good home care protects your new filling and the surrounding tooth.**

- Brush twice daily with a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily — be gentle around the treated tooth but do not skip it.
- Avoid whitening toothpastes for at least 2 weeks, as they can be abrasive on newly placed composite.
- Mouthwash with alcohol can dry out and slightly degrade composite over time — an alcohol-free rinse is preferred for long-term care.

## PROTECTING YOUR FILLING LONG-TERM

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- Avoid chewing on ice, hard candies, pens, or fingernails — these habits are among the leading causes of cracked or broken fillings.
- If you grind or clench your teeth at night, let us know. A night guard can significantly extend the life of your fillings and protect your teeth.
- Composite fillings can stain over time with heavy coffee, tea, or tobacco use. Regular professional cleanings help maintain their appearance.
- With proper care, composite fillings typically last 7–10 years or longer.

### CONTACT OUR OFFICE IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- Severe or worsening pain not relieved by over-the-counter medication
- Sensitivity or pain that worsens after the first week rather than improving
- A bite that feels uneven or high after numbness wears off
- A visible crack, chip, or rough edge on your filling
- Swelling, fever, or signs of infection around the treated tooth
- The filling feels loose or falls out

## YOUR FOLLOW-UP & ONGOING CARE

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No specific follow-up appointment is required for a routine filling, but we are always happy to see you if you have concerns. We do recommend:

- Routine dental exams and cleanings every 6 months to monitor the condition of your fillings and catch any new decay early.
- Contact us promptly if you notice any changes in how your filling feels or looks — early adjustments are simple; delayed care can mean more extensive treatment.

### Questions or Concerns? We Are Here to Help.

**KoLa Family & Cosmetic Dentistry**  
512-472-5633 | [info@koladentistry.com](mailto:info@koladentistry.com)  
2907 Duval St, Austin, TX 78705

*Thank you for trusting us with your care. We look forward to seeing you at your next visit!*