pair of monkeys, samples were taken prior to amalgam installation, during the two months in which the amalgams were in place and for two months after the amalgams had been replaced with composite resin fillings. In both studies, mercury-resistant bacteria increased when amalgam fillings were installed; in the second study the proportion of mercury-resistant bacteria declined after the amalgam fillings were removed.

The mercury-resistant bacteria recovered from the monkeys also were resistant to antibiotics such as ampicillin, chloramphenicol, tetracycline, streptomycin, erythromycin, and kanamycin.

"Since distinct genes for mercury resistance and for antibiotic resistance are often carried by movable genetic agents called plasmids," Summers said, "it was not surprising to find that 30% of the multiresistant bacteria examined could transfer their resistance genes to antibiotic-sensitive bacteria.

"In order to discover whether dental amalgams foster the same chances in the common bacteria of humans, a simple epidemiologic survey of antibiotic resistance in people with amalgam fillings would not be adequate, since many people also might have recently taken an antibiotic," she said. "A preferable way to do the study would be to examine the changes in the common bacteria of people who receive their first amalgam fillings."

From ***Infectious Diseases in Children.*** August 1991;4:21.

Polio Vaccine Choices

There currently are two different types of polio vaccines that are recommended for use under different circumstances. Most children receive the oral polio vaccine (live virus) as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the US Public Health Service's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. There are many children, however, for whom an enhanced, inactivated polio vaccine (E-IPV) is recommended. The following are indications for receiving E-IPV: the child is immunocompromised; the child has had a recent blood transfusion; the child has received radiation or chemotherapy for cancer; or the child has received a transplant.

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