

## **Mercury teeth fillings may harm some: FDA**

June 5, 2008

By Susan Heavey

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Silver-colored metal dental fillings contain mercury that may cause health problems in pregnant women, children and fetuses, the Food and Drug Administration said on Wednesday after settling a related lawsuit.

As part of the settlement with several consumer advocacy groups, the FDA agreed to alert consumers about the potential risks on its website and to issue a more specific rule next year for fillings that contain mercury.

Millions of Americans have the fillings, or amalgams, to patch cavities in their teeth.

"Dental amalgams contain mercury, which may have neurotoxic effects on the nervous systems of developing children and fetuses," the FDA said in a notice on its Web site.

The FDA said it did not recommend that people who currently have mercury fillings get them removed.

The FDA must issue the new rules in July 2009.

The lawsuit settlement was reached on Monday with several advocacy groups, including Moms Against Mercury, which had sought to have mercury fillings removed from the U.S. market.

While the FDA previously said various studies showed no harm from mercury fillings, some consumer groups contend the fillings can trigger a range of health problems such as multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's disease.

Mercury has been linked to brain and kidney damage at certain levels.

Amalgams contain half mercury and half a combination of other metals.

Charles Brown, a lawyer for one of the groups called Consumers for Dental Choice, said the agency's move represented an about-face. "Gone, gone, gone are all of FDA's claims that no science exists that amalgam is unsafe," he said in a statement.