

Choosing the best posterior composite

By Renee Knight, Editor

The thought of choosing a posterior composite can be a bit overwhelming. There are a variety of options on the market, but how do you know what will work best for your patients and your practice? Because of this, many new dentists stick with what they used in dental school. If that describes you, you could be missing out on even better options that are available today.

To help make the decision a little easier, we recently spoke with a few dentists—both experienced and new—about what they look for in a posterior composite and what they use in their practices.

Dr. Steve Melonakos, Plantation Dental

Dr. Steve Melonakos has used a variety of posterior composites in his short dental career. Before becoming a dentist he worked with Gordon Christensen at CRA, where he had the opportunity to handle and learn about many different materials. He's found that, these days, most posterior composites offer low shrinkage and marginal adaptation, but finding a material that's easy to handle is a little more challenging.

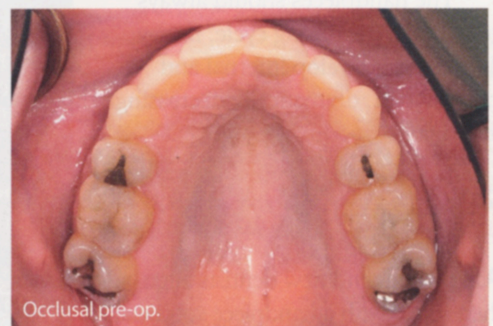
About four years ago, Dr. Melonakos began using materials from Shofu. For just about every posterior composite he places, he lines the prep with Beautiful Flow Plus and then uses the packable Beautiful II.

"In my mind, it's how it works in your hands. It's such an individual thing," said Dr. Melonakos, who's been practicing for about six years. "Beautiful is not sticky at all. It's very moldable and it stays where you put it. The handling characteristics are superb and I like the availability of many different shades."

When Dr. Melonakos first switched to the Shofu products, he was working at a high volume, mostly Medicaid office, he said. Because both the flowable and packable are so easy to use, he soon found he was spending less time adapting material—and shaving those few seconds off the procedure time was a huge help during his busy days.

"It saves time because it stays where I put it and I can get the shape I want faster," Dr. Melonakos said, noting the material also dispenses and polishes well. "The shades being what they are and my own familiarity with the products allows me to make the procedure a smooth experience for my patients."

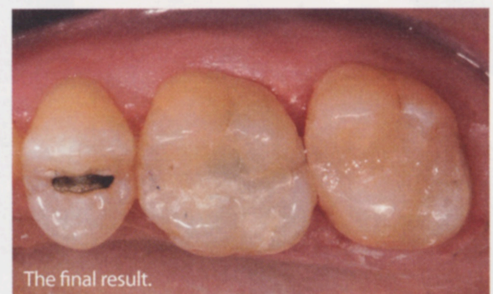
Dr. Melonakos also likes the fact he can use the material for cases beyond posterior composites. This simplifies his system, saving him time and money.



Occlusal pre-op.



The prepped restoration.



The final result.

Dr. Steven Melonakos used Shofu's Beautiful Flow Plus, Beautiful II and BeautiBond bonding agent for this posterior restoration.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Steven Melonakos.

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Posterior Composites

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His assistant knows what material he's using for a vast majority of cases, making the ordering process quick and easy.

While you might be more comfortable placing the material you used in dental school, Dr. Melonakos encourages

new dentists to get out of their comfort zone. He was happy with the material he was using before, but after giving Shofu Beautifil Flow Plus and Beautifil II a try, he found these materials were a better fit for him and his practice. Talk with colleagues, read dental magazines you trust and do your research. This might lead you to a product that provides even better results for your patients.

Dr. Michael Sesemann, Nebraska Institute of Comprehensive Dentistry

When Dr. Michael Sesemann began placing posterior composites about 20 years ago, he relied on the incremental fill technique and fourth generation adhesive bonding. This was time consuming and complicated, and he was always eager to find a less arduous, more patient friendly and financially feasible option—and he got it about seven years ago when Ivoclar Vivadent released Tetric EvoCeram Bulk Fill.

"I'm envious of dentists now a days who never had to experience that," Dr. Sesemann said of the challenges that come with the incremental fill technique. "When we first started using the bulk fill we knew immediately it was something that was going to change our lives and the lives of our patients. We have never looked back at the old protocol because this product was so revolutionary and so immediately out-of-the-box good for us."

Tetric EvoCeram Bulk Fill features Ivocerin, a germanium-based light-initiator, Dr. Sesemann said. This means that, unlike other bulk fill materials, it doesn't take much light to activate the polymerization process. Rather than making the composite translucent, it changes the chemistry so the chemical reaction is more sensitive to light. There's also a light sensitivity filter to ensure the material doesn't react to operator lights and start curing before you're ready.

Dr. Sesemann also appreciates the filler technology. With older composites, polymerization shrinkage was more than 5 percent at times. Some studies put this composite's shrinkage stress at 1.9 percent, or less than half, he said, which offers huge benefits for patients and clinicians.

"When you cure a big block of composite it's not shrinking so much it pulls away from the margins, giving clinicians the white line they really hate to see at the completion of their restorative procedure," Dr. Sesemann said. "If I don't have that shrinkage it makes for a better interproximal contact, which used to be hard to achieve when doing posterior composites."

Dr. Sesemann completes 80 percent of his posterior cases with Tetric EvoCeram, meaning he carries less inventory. He doesn't have to store multiple materials like he did in the past, or worry about those materials going bad if he doesn't use them before they expire. He has a product that offers predictable curing at 4 mm, has less polymerization shrinkage, doesn't react to light until he's ready to cure it and that polishes to a nice luster.

"You save a lot of chair time and that benefits the patient," Dr. Sesemann said. "You have better marginal stability, which makes the composite last longer. You have better interproximal contacts so there's less food catching, less chance for recurrent decay and less chance of having to do the filling over again."



BEFORE



AFTER

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BEFORE



AFTER

Before and after images of cases completed by Dr. Michael Sesemann using Tetric EvoCeram from Ivoclar Vivadent.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Michael Sesemann

**Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver,
Cornerstone Dental Associates**

Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver works in a practice with two other dentists and they all use x-tra fil bulk fill posterior composite from VOCO. They wanted a simple shaded bulk fill posterior composite and that's exactly what this material gives them.



"Being able to bulk fill is huge," Dr. Lutz-Craver said. "All the incremental layering bogs me down. I don't have the patience for it."

The material offers benefits for patients as well, she said, including shade. It blends well to almost everyone's teeth. Patients also don't have to deal with shrinkage or sensitivity that other materials might cause.

For dentists starting out, Dr. Lutz-Craver recommends looking for a material that's easy to use and predictable. It's also a good idea to find a material that doesn't require you to purchase 12 different shades. Find a system that enables you to keep your inventory small, a benefit of VOCO's x-tra fil that Dr. Lutz-Craver really appreciates.

"I didn't realize universal shading was an option when I came out of school," Dr. Lutz-Craver said. "And I was

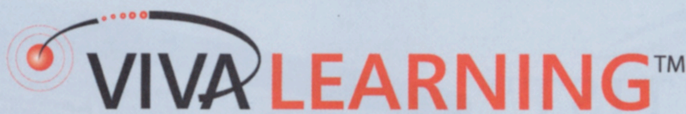


Before and after images of a case completed by Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver using x-tra fil bulk fill from VOCO.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver.

taught to layer the materials every couple millimeters, then cure and then add on and then add on. This material can be added in 4 mm increments, which is a pretty hefty amount. Using the bulk fill material instead

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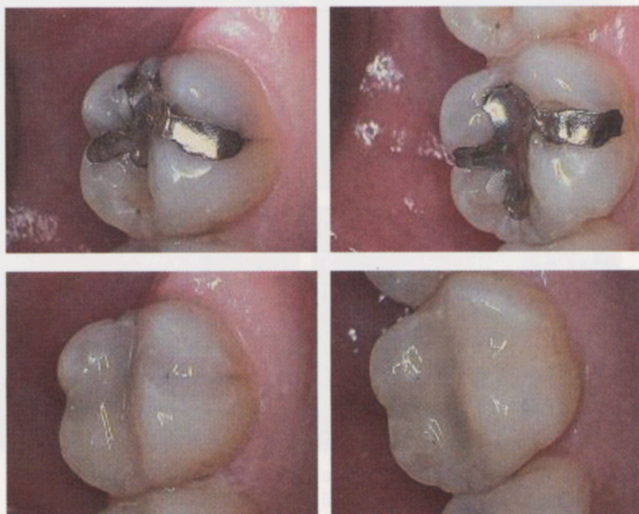
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More before and after images of a case completed by Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver using x-tra fil bulk fill from VOOCO.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver.

definitely saves time. Not having to pick out a shade saves you time and not having to place layer on layer and cure and re-cure saves time." **END**

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on age and goes up over time. You can also buy a product that allows you to pay the same amount over the course of your career. Stafford recommends getting a policy for up to 60 percent of your annual income. That amount is paid to you after taxes so it matches the income you're losing.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT COMPANY

While there are many insurance companies, it's important to find one that's reliable and financially stable, Miller said. Look for respected companies endorsed by other organizations.

All three suggest looking at A.M. Best ratings and choosing an insurance company the ratings agency gives at least an A. The business should have a good reputation for handling claims and provide the coverage you need at a reasonable cost. And of course, it's always best to go with a company that specializes in dentistry.

"Pick one that has a good reputation and that understands dentistry," Stafford said. "If you ever end up in a professional liability suit where a patient says you did something wrong, you want to make sure your legal representative understands dentistry and defending dental-related lawsuits." **END**

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