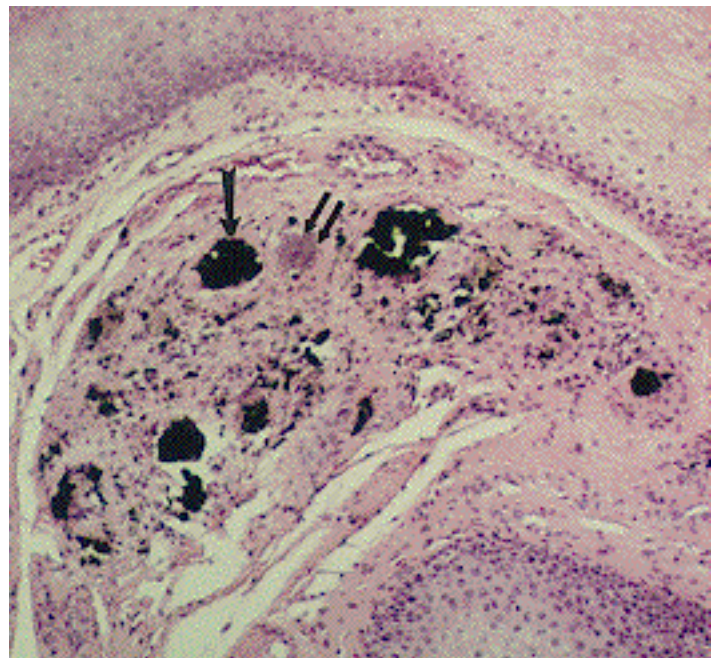


AMALGAM TATTOO

Amalgam as used in dental preparations contains chiefly silver but also mercury and tin. It becomes imbedded in the oral mucosa when a broken piece falls into an extraction site or is driven into the tissue by the dental drill; then a black or blue macular area remains in the gingiva or other oral mucosa. Pencil graphite is another cause of mucosal staining.

Microscopically, amalgam tattoo shows fragmentary areas of dense black staining and sometimes foreign body giant cells, all in a fibrotic background.

Amalgam tattoo, uvula, shows a multinucleated giant cell (double arrows) and different sized pieces of amalgam (large arrow) surrounded by histiocytes and lymphocytes in an area of mild fibrosis.



CLINICAL ASPECTS:

Differentiation from melanoma may require biopsy but otherwise no treatment is needed.