Tobacco: Unfiltered Facts

Tobacco use in any form—cigarette, cigar, pipe and smokeless (spit) tobacco—increases the risk for a variety of oral health conditions including:

Periodontal (gum) disease—Studies show that tobacco use may be one of the most significant risk factors in the development and progression of gum disease.[1] In fact, smoking may play a significant role in more than 50 percent of chronic periodontal disease cases.[1]

Tooth decay, bad breath and stained teeth—Despite good oral health habits, tobacco use is still more likely to cause cavities due to decreased saliva flow, increased plaque and tartar buildup and a greater pH level in the mouth. Beyond the medical risks, bad breath and stained teeth are other negative effects of smoking.

Tooth loss—Smokers are about twice as likely to lose their teeth as nonsmokers.[2,3] Smoking can restrict blood flow to the gum tissues, limiting delivery of nutrients necessary for the bone and gum support of teeth.

Oral cancer—Of the more than 48,000 Americans diagnosed with oral cancer annually, only 64 percent live past the five-year survival milestone.[4] Tobacco use increases oral cancer risk, and those who use tobacco and consume excessive alcohol have an especially high risk.[5]



Did you know?

There are 28 or more cancer-causing agents in just smokeless tobacco alone.[6]

Quick bites

More tobacco-related health risks:[7]

- Cancers including: bladder, esophageal, laryngeal, lung, throat, cervical, kidney, stomach and pancreatic
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) including chronic bronchitis and emphysema
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm
- Acute myeloid leukemia
- Cataracts
- Pneumonia

Discuss your concerns about tobacco use and its impact on your oral and overall health with your dentist and doctor.

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1. Dentistry IQ, "Smoking and Periodontitis," web. **2.** Krall EA et al., "Smoking, Smoking Cessation, and Tooth Loss," *Journal of Dental Research* 76, no. 10 (1997): 1653–659. **3.** Dietrich, T et al., "Tobacco Use and Incidence of Tooth Loss Among US Male Health Professionals," *Journal of Dental Research* 86, no. 4 (2007): 373–77. **4.** National Cancer Institute, "SEER Stat Fact Sheets: Oral Cavity and Pharynx Cancer," web. **5.** Oral Cancer Foundation, "The Alcohol Connection," web. **6.** Mayo Clinic, "Health Risks of Chewing Tobacco and Other Forms of Smokeless Tobacco," web. **7.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking," web.

Healthy Smile, Happy Life

Delta Dental of Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee

RC-6157 v1 PA 8/16