



Tobacco and Oral Health Fact Sheet

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

One out of two people who continue to smoke will die early because of their smoking.¹ Any tobacco use, whether smoked or smokeless, is dangerous to your health. In addition, cigarette smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco results in many oral health diseases and complications, including an increased risk of gum disease, oral infections and cancers of the mouth and throat.

What you need to know...

Tobacco can be smoked as cigarettes, cigars, or in pipes. Smokeless tobacco can be used as snuff or as chew (spit) tobacco, which is the more common variety. Snuff can be inhaled through the nose or taken dry, orally; however, most users place moist snuff against the cheek in the same manner that chew tobacco is used. E-cigarettes or “vaping” provides another means of smokeless tobacco, and can be just as harmful to your overall health and oral health as other tobacco products.

Tobacco is associated with:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Vision changes, including blindness and cataracts
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Hip fractures
- Impaired immune function
- Overall diminished health

There is also evidence of an association between smoking and pregnancy complications such as:

- Low birth weight
- Premature delivery
- Birth defects, including cleft-lip and/or cleft palate.²

Smoking causes changes to blood vessels. These changes increase the risk for gum disease, and also block your body from alerting you to gum disease and oral infections until it is too late. Stopping tobacco use will greatly reduce your risk of disease and premature death. Quitting tobacco use at any age will benefit you.²

Ways You Can Help...

- Try to quit smoking. You may not be successful the first time, but keep trying.
- If you can't quit smoking, try to cut back. Go to www.ct.gov/tobacco or call the QUIT Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- See your dental provider every six months or as directed, practice a daily oral hygiene regimen, and ask for an annual oral cancer evaluation.

Oral diseases and conditions impacted by tobacco use:

- Cavities
- Gum disease
- Staining of teeth
- Loss of taste
- Bad breath
- Abrasion of teeth
- Thick white patches inside your mouth
- Oral cancer



Footnotes:

1. <http://chfs.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/31d160f5-8270-4bb1-bb5f-a4199108a499/0/tobaccocessation.pdf>
2. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/tobacco-use>

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