



HealthyPeople • Dental

SMOKING AND ORAL HEALTH

Most people know smoking can cause many different medical problems and, in some cases, fatal diseases. However, many people don't realize the damage that smoking does to their mouth, gums, and teeth.

Smoking can lead to tooth staining, gum disease, tooth loss, and in more severe cases mouth cancer. The gums are affected because smoking causes a lack of oxygen in the bloodstream, so the infected gums don't heal. Smoking causes people to have more dental plaque and causes gum disease to get worse more quickly than in non-smokers. Gum disease is still the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

One of the effects of smoking is staining on the teeth due to the nicotine and tar in the tobacco. It can make your teeth yellow in a very short time, and heavy smokers often complain that their teeth are almost brown after years of smoking. Most people know that smoking can cause lung and throat cancer, but many people still don't know that it is one of the main causes of mouth cancer too. Every year thousands of people die from mouth cancer brought on by smoking.



REDUCE THE DENTAL SIDE EFFECTS OF SMOKING

There are special toothpastes for people who smoke. They are sometimes a little more abrasive than ordinary toothpastes, and you should use them with care. Your dental team may recommend that you use these toothpastes alternately with your usual toothpaste. There are also several 'whitening' toothpastes on the market. Although they do not affect the natural color of your teeth, they may be effective at removing staining, and therefore may improve the overall appearance of your teeth. People who smoke may find they are

more likely to have bad breath than non-smokers. Fresh-breath products such as mouthwashes may help to disguise the problem in the short term, but will not cure it.

It is important that you visit your dental team regularly for a normal check up and a full-mouth examination so that any other conditions can be spotted early. Your dental team will also examine your cheeks, tongue, and throat for any signs of other conditions that may need more

investigation. They may also be able to put you in touch with organizations and self-help groups who will have the latest information to help you stop smoking. Your dentist may also refer you to a dental hygienist for extra treatment, thorough cleaning, and to keep a closer check on the health of your mouth. Your dental hygienist will be able to advise you on how often you should visit them, although this should usually be every three to six months.

Source: dentalhealth.org