

The Oral Health Connection

Tobacco & Oral Health



Tobacco remains the most common cause of addiction and preventable illness, disability, and death. Tobacco use compromises medical and dental care and presents serious threats to one's health and well-being and to the health and well-being of family members, associates, and the community.

Tobacco Effects in the Mouth

Many oral conditions are attributed to tobacco use. These conditions vary depending on the type of tobacco used (smoking or smokeless) and the form in which it is used (cigarettes, pipes, cigars, chewing tobacco, moist snuff).

The frequency and duration of tobacco use also contributes to the pattern and the severity of clinical presentation.

Smoking

- Reduces blood flow to your gums and cuts the supply of vital nutrients.
- Reduces vitamin C levels, which are needed to keep your gums healthy.
- Can speed disease progression of gum disease, leading to bone loss, and eventual tooth loss.
- Reduces your saliva flow. Saliva is needed to clean the lining of your mouth and protect teeth from decay.
- Raises the mouth's temperature, damaging and killing important cells in your mouth.
- Releases damaging tobacco compounds that cause oral cancer (cancer of the mouth).
- Smoking can cause an extra build up of plaque.
- Smoking can cause small bumps on upper surface of tongue to become enlarged. (tongue may look hairy or furry, change color – black, brown green).

Smokeless Tobacco

- Causes gums to shrink, exposing the root of the tooth.
- Increases your risk of tooth decay and gum disease.
- Increases the risk of oral cancer four to six fold.

Signs of oral cancer

- A swelling, lump, or growth in the mouth that does not heal.
- White or red patches inside the mouth that don't go away.
- Loose teeth for no apparent reason.
- Pain when swallowing.
- Persistent sore throat, nagging cough or hoarseness.
- Difficulty swallowing or in opening your mouth.
- Unusual bleeding in your nose or mouth.
- Numbness or tingling in your lips or tongue.

If you have signs or symptoms, see a dentist. Dentists are highly trained specialists in oral diseases. They can detect oral cancers at an early stage when they are small and most treatable

Reduce Your Risk Factors

- Stop using tobacco. **For help with quitting call the CT Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW**
 - Check yourself for oral cancer once a month if you use tobacco.
- Get an oral cancer examination at your semi-annual dental visit.
 - Brush and Floss at least twice a day.
 - Have your teeth and gums cleaned and checked by your dentist at least every 6 months