

Smoking and Oral Health

Besides the link between tobacco and heart disease, stroke, emphysema, and cancer (especially lung and throat cancers), smoking leads to the following oral health consequences:

- Bad breath
- Tooth discoloration
- Inflammation of the salivary gland openings on the roof of the mouth
- Increased build up of plaque and tartar on the teeth
- Increased loss of bone within the jaw
- Increased risk of leukoplakia (unhealthy white patches inside the mouth)
- Increased risk of developing gum disease, a leading cause of tooth loss
- Delayed healing process following tooth extraction, periodontal treatment, or oral surgery
- Lower success rate of dental implant procedures
- Increased risk of developing oral cancer

How Does Smoking Lead to Gum Disease?

Smoking and other tobacco products can lead to gum disease by affecting the attachment of bone and soft tissue to your teeth. More specifically, it appears that smoking interferes with the normal function of gum tissue cells. This interference makes smokers more susceptible to infections, such as periodontal disease, and also seems to impair blood flow to the gums — which may affect wound healing.

Do Pipe and Cigar Smokers Experience Fewer Oral Health Risks Than Cigarette Smokers?

No, like cigarettes, pipes and cigars do lead to oral health problems. Pipe smokers also have a similar risk of tooth loss as cigarette smokers. In addition, pipe and cigar smokers are still at risk for oral and pharyngeal (throat) cancers — even if you don't inhale.

Are Smokeless Tobacco Products Safer?

No. Like cigars and cigarettes, smokeless tobacco products (for example, snuff and chewing tobacco) contain at least 28 chemicals that have been shown to increase the risk of oral cancer and cancer of the throat and esophagus. Smokeless tobacco also typically contains sand and grit, which can wear down your teeth.

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