



# Reasons to Kick Your Tobacco Habit

## Tobacco and Oral Health

Few people can debate the negative health consequences of regular tobacco use. It's the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., but it can also take a toll on the quality of your life.

Often overlooked is how tobacco negatively impacts oral health—which includes eroding teeth, inflamed gums and burning tongue or mouth. Giving up tobacco can help you avoid troubles ranging from mild embarrassment and constant pain to losing part of your mouth or throat to cancer. Below is a list of just some of the oral health issues smoking can cause.<sup>1</sup>

- Stained teeth
- Bad breath
- Increased plaque and tartar build up
- More cavities, receding gums and mouth pain
- Bone loss within jaw, which can lead to tooth loss
- Gum disease (50% greater chance than non-smokers)
- Diminished ability to taste food
- Reduced sense of smell

- Leukoplakia (white patches on gums, tongue, cheeks)
- Oral cancer (white patches, numbness, painful chewing or speaking, chronic sore throat)

All kinds of tobacco have risks. Developing oral health-related issues is not only possible, but is more probable if you smoke cigarettes, cigars or a pipe—and don't forget about regular exposure to second hand smoke.

Think smokeless tobacco products are safer? Snuff and chew tobacco contain at least 28 chemicals shown to increase the risk of oral cancer and cancer of the throat and esophagus.<sup>1</sup>

A comprehensive oral hygiene plan is vital for everyone, but doubly so if you smoke. Make sure to see your dentist, brush and floss regularly...and commit to yourself, your family and your friends to stop smoking!

## Quitting tobacco is hard. Living with deteriorating health is harder.

Did you know that ninety percent of people with cancer of the mouth, lips, tongue or throat use tobacco?<sup>2</sup> Smoking harms nearly every organ in your body and shortens your life. What does this mean for you? The sooner you quit smoking, the better.

We don't get many second chances; waiting until you're told you have throat cancer or you lose a few teeth isn't the best time to make a commitment to stop smoking. Today is.



*5 years after quitting, the risk that former smokers develop cancer of the mouth, throat or esophagus is cut by 50%.<sup>3</sup>*

## Ask for help. Your quality of life—and your life itself—is at stake.

The more public you are about your resolution to stop smoking, the more pressure you'll feel to keep your word. But you'll also get much-needed support from family, friends and coworkers. When you are ready, your dentist or doctor can recommend products to make quitting easier, like the patch you wear to gradually wean your body of the nicotine it craves.

Brace yourself for the challenges that lie ahead, so you'll be prepared to handle the people, places and circumstances you associate with smoking. Find a smoking cessation class and attend with the confidence of someone who has made a difficult decision. You have the opportunity to enhance the quality of your life—which means being around longer for those you love!

<sup>1</sup> WebMD.com. *Smoking and Oral Health*. [www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health](http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health).

<sup>2</sup> Beaumont Health System. *Oral Cancer*. <http://cancer.beaumont.edu/oral-cancer>.

<sup>3</sup> American Cancer Society. *When smokers quit—What are the benefits over time?* [www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/guidetoquittingsmoking/guide-to-quitting-smoking-benefits](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/guidetoquittingsmoking/guide-to-quitting-smoking-benefits)