

Smoking – and the health of your teeth, gums and mouth

What effect does smoking have on my mouth?

Smoking is a major cause of oral cancer. Oral cancer includes tumours of the cheek, gum, tongue, lip, and the floor and lining of the mouth.

If you smoke, you are around three times more likely to have gum disease. This is because smoking reduces your immune system's ability to control the harmful bacteria that cause gum disease.

Bleeding gums are usually a sign of gum disease, but the nicotine in tobacco smoke decreases blood flow to the gums, which mask the symptoms of gum disease.

People who smoke are also more likely to lose teeth than people who don't smoke.

Mouth and throat cancer (oral cancer)

Men who smoke are 10 times more likely to get oral cancer, compared to men who do not smoke. The chance of developing oral cancer is five times higher in women who smoke, compared to women who do not smoke. Only half of the people who get oral cancer will survive after five years.

Signs of oral cancer may be white or red patches in the mouth that do not go away, sores in the mouth that do not heal, changes in the way teeth fit together, or lumps and swelling.

Tobacco and alcohol account for most cases of oral cancers, and the combination of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol places you at even greater chance of developing oral cancer.

How does quitting smoking improve my oral health?

- Quitting smoking will help to prevent further teeth staining and can improve the smell of your breath.
- Quitting can improve your sense of taste and smell, as smoking dulls your taste buds.
- Quitting means a better recovery and a shorter healing time after an injury or surgery to your mouth. Smokers have reduced blood flow to their gums.
- Smokers can also get 'smoker's palate'. Smokers develop a pale or white roof of the mouth, often with red dots. Smoker's palate can disappear when you quit smoking.

Quitting smoking, good oral hygiene and having regular check-ups with your dentist will prevent and control gum disease.

Where can I get support to quit?

- **Quitline (13 7848)**

Quitline is available 7 days a week offering support, encouragement and resources to people who want to quit smoking.

If you're interested in quitting or would just like some information, call Quitline 13 7848.



- **Talk to your health professional**

Discuss quitting smoking with your general practitioner (GP), pharmacist or community health worker and plan your quit strategy together.

- **Consider using pharmacotherapy**

Different products are available to help you quit smoking.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) includes patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers and mouth spray. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, which reduces withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings and anxiety.

Varenicline and Bupropion Hcl and are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit. These medications are available only on prescription. Your GP can help decide if they are suitable for you.

- **Other Resources**

- Visit **Quit HQ** for more information on quitting smoking at www.qld.gov.au/quithq
- Download the '**MyQuitBuddy**' app on your smartphone. For further information visit www.quitnow.gov.au
- Download the '**Quit for You – Quit for Two**' app on your smartphone. For further information visit www.quitnow.gov.au