



Smoking Out the Truth about Tobacco and Teeth

Everyone is familiar with the effects of smoking on the lungs, but what about on teeth and gums?

Cigarettes can be harmful to teeth, gums, the tongue, and even the throat. It all starts with bacteria sticking to the plaque on teeth, leading to bad breath and tooth discoloration. Tobacco also hinders blood flow to the gums, depriving them of the proper nutrients to stay healthy. This can create gum disease or oral cancer. Gum disease is the leading cause of tooth loss.

A WebMD study showed that smokers who reduce the habit to less than half a pack a day run three times the risk of developing gum disease compared to a non smoker. (Smokers who smoke more than a pack and a half a day run six times the risk of a non smoker) Another little fact, 90 percent of people with mouth, throat, tongue, or lip cancer use tobacco products.

Cigars and smokeless tobacco are often thought of as a safe alternative to smoking. Cigar and pipe smokers experience the same recession of the gums and jawbone as cigarette smokers making cigars just as bad for oral health. The only difference is cigar smoke is not inhaled.

According to WebMD, one can of smokeless tobacco contains more nicotine than 60 cigarettes. This makes it harder to quit. Snuff or dipping tobacco can wear down the gum line over time, exposing the roots of teeth. Exposed roots are more sensitive to hot and cold temperatures which could make eating or drinking uncomfortable.

Smoking creates not just problems for the lungs but also for the mouth region. Quitting cigarettes can be the best decision of a person's life. Gum and patches are an obvious way to fight the craving and have helped many people quit.

The Department of Human Resource Management has a tobacco cessation program called "Quit 4 Life" for state employees. As part of the program, a Quit Coach will work side by side with the participant to work out the best plan for him/her. The best part is all of this comes at no cost. Those interested in the program can call **1-866-784-8454** for more information.