

Talk to your dentist about your smoking

“ At my dental check-up my dentist noticed a white patch inside my mouth. She said my level of smoking and drinking alcohol raised my chances of getting oral cancer. Somehow I had got into the habit of smoking a pack a day and having a few drinks most nights. Luckily in my case it turned out to be nothing serious but it was enough of a scare to make me cut down my drinking and I've just stopped smoking. Already my breath smells fresher, my kids don't complain about cigarette smells and I know that my mouth is much healthier as a result.



“ I was really surprised when my dentist said I had early signs of gum disease. He said smoking was a factor in causing it and if things continued as they were I might lose a tooth. I decided to quit there and then. It was hard but I just kept on thinking about keeping my teeth. The big bonus is that since stopping smoking and cleaning my teeth regularly my dentist has said my gums have improved.



For advice or practical help

Quitline 13 7848

The Quitline is a confidential telephone information and advice service. For the cost of a local call (except for mobile phones), Quit Specialists provide encouragement and support to help smokers quit.

Go online: www.quit.org.au

Quit Victoria's website has a range of information that you can read, interact with and download. Find out more about the Quitline, QuitCoach and QuitTxt.

QuitCoach: www.quitcoach.org.au

QuitCoach is a web-based computer program that asks you questions and helps you quit by giving free personal advice tailored to your needs.

QuitTxt

QuitTxt provides regular SMS messages including tips and encouragement to help you keep on track throughout your quit attempt. To begin, all you need to do is register and complete a brief questionnaire at www.quit.org.au/quittxt.

Quit Victoria is a joint initiative of Cancer Council Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Heart Foundation and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

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Smoking and the health of your mouth, gums and teeth



What effect does smoking have on my mouth?

Smoking is a major cause of oral cancer (cancer in the mouth). If you smoke, you are over three times more likely to get oral cancer than someone who doesn't. One in three people who get this disease will die within five years.

What if I stop smoking?

If you stop smoking now, you will cut down much of your risk of oral cancer within 10 years. Your risk gets less and less with time.

Stopping smoking improves the health of your mouth, gums and teeth.



What if I smoke and drink alcohol too?

If you smoke cigarettes as well as drink alcohol, you increase your chances of getting oral cancer even more than just smoking by itself or just drinking by itself.

Will quitting smoking and reducing alcohol help reduce my risk?

Yes! Stopping smoking and moderate* drinking of alcohol dramatically lessens your chances of getting oral cancer.

What does smoking do to my gums and teeth?

Smoking is an important cause of gum disease (periodontal disease). Gum disease affects the gums and bones that support your teeth. The immune system has an important job in reducing the harmful germs that can cause this disease. Smoking cigarettes affects your immune system, making your body less able to fight off these germs. Your gums are more likely to get infected and break down.

Germs can spread and grow below the line where the gum joins the tooth. This leads to the break down of bone and connecting tissues around the tooth causing deep spaces to form called periodontal pockets. These spaces mean there is less support to hold the tooth in place and more chance of losing your tooth.

Smokers' gums and bones are less able to heal properly after being damaged by harmful germs. If you smoke, gum disease gets worse faster, and treatment for it does not work as well.

* Low risk drinking for adults is defined as no more than two standard drinks in any one day. For pregnant women, the safest option is not to drink alcohol. (www.nhmrc.gov.au)

And if I give up smoking?

If you stop smoking you will be better able to fight off germs that cause gum disease and allow damaged gums and bone to heal. Stopping smoking, keeping your teeth clean and having regular check-ups with your dentist will help to prevent gum disease.

Does smoking cause any other changes in my mouth?

- Smoking can cause smoker's palate. Smokers develop a pale or white roof of the mouth often with red dots. **Smoker's palate can disappear when you stop smoking.**
- Smokers can also get smoker's melanosis, where brown blotches appear on the gums and inside cheeks. **Stopping smoking can reverse this change.**
- Smoking causes unsightly staining of the teeth. **Quitting will help to prevent further staining.**
- If you smoke, you're more likely to take longer to heal after oral surgery or having a tooth out. **Stopping smoking may mean a better recovery and taking a shorter time to heal.**
- Smoking can give you bad breath. **Quitting can help improve bad breath.**

