

# Tobacco & Your Oral Health

We all know smoking is bad for us, but did you know that chewing tobacco is just as harmful to your oral health as cigarettes?

Tobacco causes bad breath, which nobody likes, but it has far more serious risks to your oral health, including:

- Mouth sores
- Slow healing after oral surgery
- Difficulties correcting cosmetic dental problems
- Stained teeth and tongue
- Dulled sense of taste and smell

## The Biggest Risk?

Cancer. The Centers for Disease Control have linked smoking and tobacco use to oral cancer. Oral cancer is the eighth most common cancer in the U.S., and it's very difficult to detect. As a result, two-thirds of all cases are diagnosed in late stages, making treatment and survival difficult.<sup>1</sup>



## Tobacco and Gum Disease

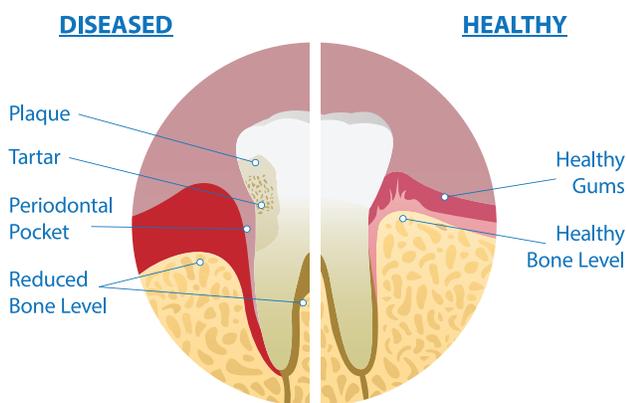
Tobacco use is also a huge risk factor for gum disease, a leading cause of tooth loss. More than 41% of daily smokers over the age of 65 are toothless because of gum disease, compared to only 20% of non-smokers.<sup>2</sup>

Maintain good oral health by avoiding tobacco. It keeps your whole body healthier.

## The Effects of Smoking on Your Gums

Smoking reduces blood flow to your gums, cutting off vital nutrients and preventing bones from healing. This lets bacteria from tartar infect surrounding tissue, forming deep pockets between teeth and gums.<sup>3</sup> Bacteria and tartar can destroy the supporting bones, which causes gums to recede. The result? Mouth pain and tooth loss.

## Effects of periodontal (gum) disease<sup>4</sup>



## Is Smokeless Tobacco Safer?

Smokeless tobacco—chew, dip and snuff—is not regulated by the FDA so it's hard to know what's in it. At least 28 cancer-causing toxins have been found in smokeless tobacco products. In addition to the same risks as smoking, smokeless tobacco can cause tooth decay from added sugar and grit.<sup>5</sup>

## What Can I Do?

**Quit.** It's the only way to lower your risk of cancer, gum disease and other health problems caused by tobacco. It's not easy to beat a nicotine addiction, but millions of people have done it. You can, too.

Talk to your doctor. Make a plan. Develop a support network of people who care and will help you stick to your plan. The sooner you start, the easier it is. You'll feel healthier within weeks.

**Learn how good oral health can improve your overall health.**

**Visit the Dental Health Center at [UnitedConcordia.com](http://UnitedConcordia.com) for videos and oral health tips.**

Additional related information can be found on the websites of the Academy of General Dentistry, [www.agd.org](http://www.agd.org), and the American Dental Association, [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org); and in *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2000.

1. *Tobacco-Related Cancers Decrease*, American Dental Association, 09/08.
2. *Tobacco Use and Periodontal Disease*, American Academy of Periodontology, 07/10.
3. *Periodontal Disease*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12/09.
4. *Types of Gum Disease*, American Academy of Periodontology, 07/10.
5. *Smoking (Tobacco) Cessation*, American Dental Association, 07/10.