

# Oral Health

and Tobacco

# Oral Health and Tobacco

Almost everybody knows that smoking can cause lung diseases, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Ever think about what happens to the place where you put the tobacco – your mouth?

Stained teeth; brown, hairy tongue; and bad breath are the least of your problems.

# Get the Facts

- The average starting age for Kentucky teens using smokeless tobacco is 16. *Youth Tobacco Survey 2008*
- 6.65% of Kentucky adults use smokeless tobacco, yet 9% of Kentucky youth use it. *BRFSS 2009, Youth Tobacco Survey 2008*
- The Kentucky adult smoking rate is 25.6%, the high school smoking rate is 27%, and the middle school smoking rate is 12%. *BRFSS 2009, Youth Tobacco Survey 2008*
- The average starting age for Kentucky teens smoking is 14. *Youth Tobacco Survey 2008*

# More Facts

- Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers. *US Department of Health and Human Services*
- Dippers may be exposed to more cancer-causing chemicals than a one-pack-a-day cigarette smoker, based on the higher nicotine levels per serving in smokeless tobacco. *American Legacy Foundation*
- Regardless of its form – all tobacco contains nicotine, which is highly addictive. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

# Oral Health Effects - Smoking

- Reduces blood flow to your gums and cuts the supply of vital nutrients.
- Reduces vitamin C levels, which is needed to keep gums healthy.
- Can cause gum disease, bone loss, and tooth loss.
- Reduces your saliva flow. Saliva is needed to clean the lining of your mouth and protect teeth from decay.
- Raises the mouth's temperature, damaging and killing important cells in the mouth.
- Releases tobacco compounds that cause oral cancer.
- Smokers are 2 to 18 times more likely to develop oral cancer than non-smokers.

# Oral health effects - Smokeless

- Eats away at your gums and wears them down.
- Increases your risk of tooth decay and gum disease.
- Increased risk of oral leukoplakia.
- Increases the risk of any oral cancer by 4 to 6 times.
- Smokeless tobacco users are up to 50 times more likely to develop oral cancer in areas where the tobacco is placed.

# Warning Signs of Oral Cancer

- A swelling, lump, or growth in the mouth that does not heal.
- White or red patches inside the mouth that don't go away.
- Loose teeth for no apparent reason.
- Pain when swallowing.
- Persistent sore throat.
- Difficulty swallowing or in opening your mouth.
- A nagging cough or persistent hoarseness.
- Unusual bleeding in your nose or mouth.
- Numbness or tingling in your lips or tongue.

# Best Defense against Oral Cancer

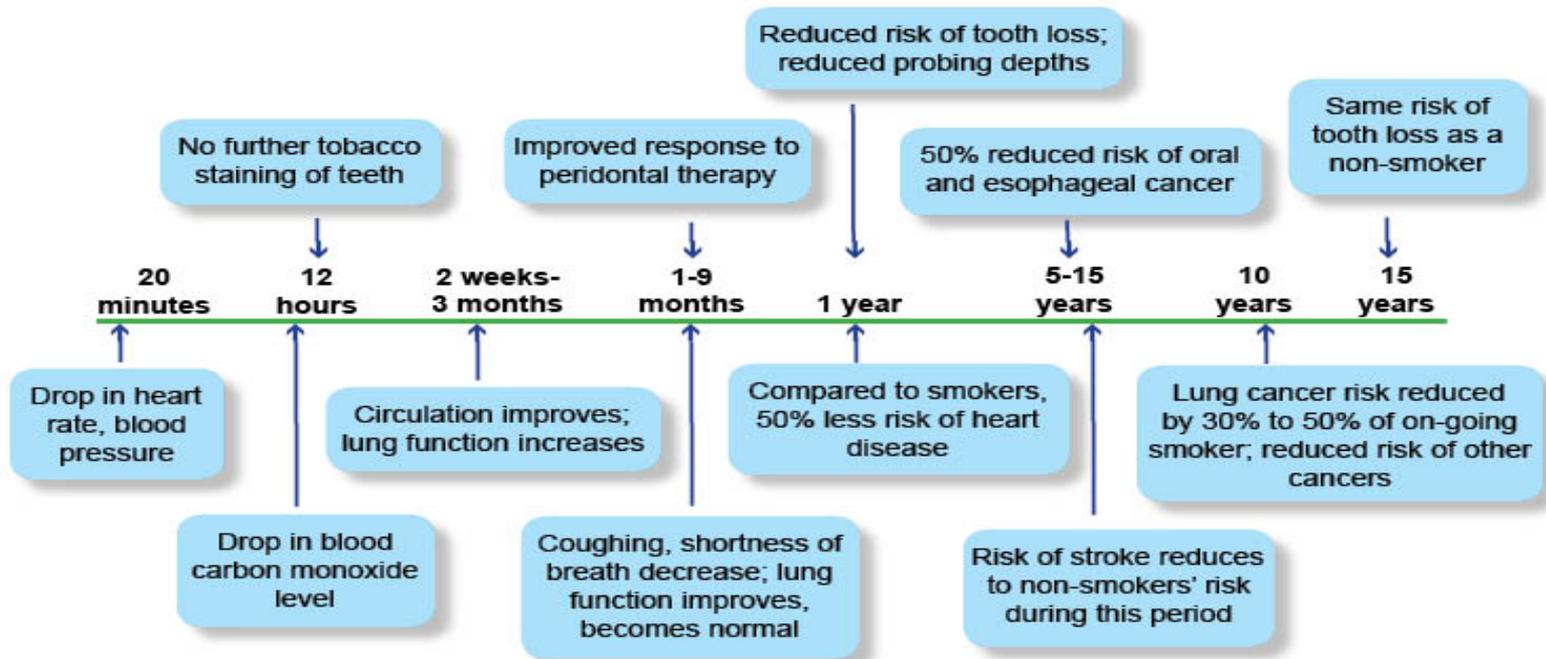
## Stop using tobacco

Most early signs of oral cancer are painless and are difficult to detect without a thorough head and neck examination. Check yourself for oral cancer once a month if you use tobacco. Detection of oral cancer through periodic medical and dental examinations can significantly reduce the risk of these life-threatening cancers.

# Tobacco Cessation in the Dental Office

- 10-15% quit rate by incorporating an affective tobacco cessation program in the dental practice.
- The 5A's program resulted in the highest quit rate.
- In highly motivated patients, quit line referral was effective.
- At 7 days, 25% abstinence rate for quit line vs. 27% for 5A's counseling.
- At end of 6 months, the quit line rates were higher. The results were superior to those minimal interventions (self-help materials, short advise session, stand alone pharmacotherapy treatment)

# Benefits of Quitting



Adapted from Tobacco Cessation and the Impact of Tobacco Use on Oral Health, Collins, Fiona M.

# So, What Can I Do?

- Arrange a meeting with your local dentists and/or hygienists and encourage them to perform oral exams.
- Encourage dentists and/or hygienists to Ask, Advise and Refer.
- Share information about the Quitline, BecomeAnEx, and your Cooper Clayton class schedules.
- Ask to place materials in their waiting areas.

# Resources

- American Cancer Society
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Institute of Health
- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
- National Cancer Institute



Bobbye Gray, RN, BS  
Nurse Consultant  
Tobacco Prevention and Cessation  
(502) 564-9358 ext. 3858  
[Bobbye.gray@ky.gov](mailto:Bobbye.gray@ky.gov)