



Tobacco and Oral Health Fact Sheet

The single most important thing that you can do for your health and the health of others is to quit using tobacco.

Smoking and smokeless tobacco products can have a dramatic effect on a person's appearance and can potentially be fatal. Have you thought about how tobacco affects the inside of your mouth? Stained teeth, periodontal disease, and bad breath could be the least of your problems!

Smoking Tobacco:

- Can cause gum disease, bone loss and tooth loss
- Reduces blood flow to your gums
- Reduces the Vitamin C levels needed to keep your gums healthy
- Raises the temperature in the mouth, damaging and killing important cells in your mouth
- Releases tobacco compounds that can cause cancer in the mouth
- Smokers are 2 to 18 times more likely to develop oral cancer than non-smokers

Smokeless Tobacco:

- Increases your risk of tooth decay and gum disease
- Eats away at your gums causing gum recession and bone loss
- 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, especially in areas where tobacco is placed
- Pipe smokers and smokeless tobacco users are prone to excessive wear on their teeth

Best Defense Against Oral Cancer:

- Stop using tobacco
- Check yourself for oral cancer monthly if you use tobacco
- Get an oral cancer exam at each dental visit

Early Warning Signs of Oral Cancer:

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

If you have any of these signs – SEE A DENTIST! Dentists are highly trained specialists in oral diseases. They can detect oral cancer at an early stage when it is more treatable.

For Help Quitting:

For Kentuckians who want to stop using tobacco within the next 30 days call Quit Now Kentucky at 1-800 Quit Now (1-800-784-8669) from 8am to 1am EST (7am to 12 midnight CST) Monday through Sunday. If contemplating quitting log on to www.QuitNowKentucky.org for resources to help you get ready to quit. All cessation services are bilingual and FREE.