

How Tobacco Use Affects Your Mouth

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and smokeless tobacco, can cause significant harm to your oral health, including:

- Oral cancer
- Periodontal (gum) disease - a leading cause of tooth loss and sensitivity
- Delayed healing after a tooth extraction or other oral surgery
- Loss of sense of taste and smell
- Bad breath
- Stained teeth and tongue

Smokeless Tobacco

Many people believe that smokeless tobacco (also known as dip, chew, or snuff) is a safe alternative to cigarette use. It is NOT. Like cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, smokeless tobacco products have toxins associated with cancer. Smokeless tobacco is known to cause cancers of the mouth, lip, and tongue.

Smokeless tobacco can also irritate your gum tissue and increase your risk for gum disease. Sugar is often added to improve the flavor of smokeless tobacco, which increases the risk for tooth decay. Smokeless tobacco also typically contains sand and grit, which can wear down your teeth.

Quitting Tobacco Use

Quitting tobacco use is difficult, but resources are available to assist you. Call Quitline Iowa at 1-800-784-8669 or visit their website at www.quitlineiowa.org.



Oral Cancer

Oral cancer most often occurs in those people who use tobacco in any form. Oral cancer can affect any area of the mouth including the lips, gums, cheeks, tongue, and the hard or soft palate. Signs and symptoms that may indicate oral cancer include:

- A sore that bleeds easily or does not heal
- A color change in the mouth (gray, red, or white spots or patches), rather than a healthy pink color
- Pain, tenderness, or numbness anywhere in your mouth or lips
- A lump or a leathery, wrinkled or rough patch inside your mouth
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving your jaw or tongue
- A change in the way your teeth fit together

See your dentist or physician if you notice any of these changes.