



Tobacco and Oral Health

How does tobacco affect oral health?

- Tobacco use causes bad breath and discolored teeth.
- Tobacco use increases risk of developing cavities.
- Grit in snuff eats away at the gums, exposing tooth roots, which are sensitive to hot and cold temperature and can be very painful.
- Sugar in chewing tobacco also causes decay.
- Long term use of tobacco results in oral cancer.
- Smoking impairs both the immune system and the healing mechanisms in the mouth.

How is cigarette smoking linked to gum disease?

Cigarette smoking is a major preventable risk factor for gum disease. A CDC study found that current cigarette smokers are four times more likely than nonsmokers to develop tooth loss.

This risk increases for those who are moderate (less than a half pack) or heavy (more than a pack and a half a day) smokers.

Tobacco and Oral Cancer

Approximately 75 percent of oral cavity and pharyngeal cancers are attributed to the use of smoked and smokeless tobacco. (These cancers include the mouth, tongue, lips, throat, parts for the nose, and larynx.) Those who chew tobacco are also at high risk for gum and cheek lesions that can lead to cancer.

Oral cancer accounts for 2 to 4% of all cancers, but relative survival rates are among the lowest of major cancers. Only one-half the number of persons diagnosed with oral cancer are alive five years after the diagnosis.

What is World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) (May 31)?

World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is a worldwide effort to raise awareness of the international impact of tobacco use and promote a tobacco-free environment.

Why is WNTD an important event?

Currently, approximately 1.1 billion people around the world use tobacco products. Nearly 3.5 million people die every year as a result of tobacco-related illnesses. This equals 10,000 deaths per day.

Those who quit using tobacco make substantial savings through lowered health care costs and savings from not purchasing tobacco products.

Signs and Symptoms of Oral Cancer

- A mouth sore that fails to heal or that bleeds easily.
- A white or red patch in the mouth that will not go away.
- A lump, thickening or soreness in the mouth, throat, or tongue.
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing food.

Most early signs of oral cancer are painless and are difficult to detect without a thorough head and neck examination by a dental or medical professional.

Detection of oral cancer through periodic medical and dental examinations can significantly reduce the risk of these life-threatening cancers.

Need Help Quitting? Try the Kansas Tobacco Quitline — FREE!

The Kansas Tobacco Quitline provides you toll-free access to trained tobacco cessation counselors, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at no charge to you. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or visit the website www.kdheks.gov/tobacco.