



## DENTAL CLINIC

# TOBACCO USE AND ORAL HEALTH



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The use of tobacco products can lead to various health problems and, in some cases, fatal diseases. However, tobacco users don't realise the damage that smoking does to their mouth, gums and teeth.

### How smoking affects gums and teeth

People who smoke are more likely to have gum disease. Smoking may change the type of bacteria in dental plaque, increasing the number of bacteria that are more harmful. It also reduces the blood flow in the gums and supporting tissues of teeth making them more likely to become inflamed. Because of the reduced blood flow, smokers may not get the warning symptoms of bleeding gums. This can eventually lead to tooth loss.

### How smoking stains teeth

One of the effects of smoking is staining on teeth due to the nicotine and tar in tobacco. It can make teeth yellow in a very short time, and heavy smokers often complain that their teeth are almost brown after years of smoking.

### How smoking is linked to cancer

Most people know that smoking can cause lung and throat cancer, but many don't realise that it is one of the main causes of mouth cancer too. There are more and more new cases of mouth cancer each year, and thousands die every year from the disease.

### Special dental products for smokers

There are special toothpastes for people who smoke. They are sometimes a little more abrasive than ordinary pastes and need to be used with care. Dentists may recommend the use of these toothpastes alternately with usual toothpastes, for example - using the special toothpaste in the morning and ordinary paste at night.

### Mouthwash for smokers

People who smoke are more likely to have bad breath than non-smokers. Fresh breath products such as mouthwashes may help to disguise the problem in the short term, but that is all they will do.

### Frequency of visits to the dentist

Regular visits to the dentist are important, both for a normal check up as well as a full mouth examination so that any other condition can be spotted early. People who smoke are more likely to have stained teeth and gum disease, and therefore may need appointments more often for teeth cleaning and polishing.