

Tobacco and YOUR ORAL HEALTH



Congratulations! By reading this article, you've taken the first step in the right direction. You understand that tobacco can be harmful to your oral health and you want to do something about it.

How does tobacco use impact my oral health?

If you're a smoker, you've likely seen this warning before:

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.

Did you know that there are also many oral health complications that tobacco use can cause? These include:¹

- Oral cancer
- Bad breath
- Stained teeth and tongue
- Decreased sense of taste and smell
- Periodontal (gum) disease
- Delayed healing

If you use smokeless tobacco (chew), you also have an increased risk for tooth decay. This is because sugar is often added to enhance the flavor. Also, swallowing the juice from smokeless tobacco increases the risks

for many other types of cancer - including cancer of the voice box, esophagus, colon and bladder.

Smoking may be responsible for almost 75% of periodontal (gum) disease among adults.¹ And gum disease has been associated with numerous medical conditions like diabetes, heart disease, stroke and more. If you develop gum disease, using tobacco can slow down the healing process and make the treatment results less predictable.¹ Tobacco use can also cause receding gums, exposed tooth roots, tooth decay and can increase your risk of developing sensitivity to hot and cold.² Treatment of these symptoms can be expensive and require multiple trips to the dental office.

What steps can I take to quit?

Pick a quit date and have a "Quit Day" plan

Here are a few tips to help you make it through your Quit Day.

- Make sure the day you choose to quit is a low-stress day
- Try to avoid places with a lot of tobacco or alcohol

GO YOUSM



Offered by: Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and/or Cigna Dental Health, Inc. and its subsidiaries.

- Develop a personal support system of friends and/or family
- Drink plenty of water
- Keep your hands and mouth busy. For example, chewing gum, eating small, healthy snacks, and playing with a paperclip or pen may help to distract you. But make sure not to play with things in your mouth – doing so could cause damage to your teeth.

Plan how you'll deal with triggers to using tobacco

A trigger is anything in the environment that causes you to respond in a certain way. What will you do when you're angry? When you're bored? When you're with a friend who uses tobacco? At a time when you would usually use tobacco?

Choose healthy replacements and rewards

When you have the urge for tobacco, try to do something you enjoy – take a walk, chew something like carrots or sunflower seeds, or participate in a hobby or sport you love. Make sure to reward yourself with positive things such as massages or lunch with a friend. Or, imagine where you could go on vacation if you put the money you save from not buying tobacco into a jar!

What are the benefits of quitting?

You'll realize some physical benefits of quitting tobacco immediately, while others may take time. But with patience and determination, your body will become healthier.

Here are just some of the benefits you may experience from quitting:²

- **Within 20 minutes** – Blood pressure begins to decrease and pulse rate returns to normal
- **Within 2–3 days** – Smell and taste improve and chance of heart attack decreases
- **Within 2–3 months** – Lung function increases by up to 30% and circulation improves
- **Within 1 year** – Added risk of heart disease drops by 50% and coughing decreases
- **Within 5–10 years** – Risk of stroke drops to that of people who have never smoked
- **Within 10 years** – Risk of many cancers decrease as the body replaces precancerous cells with normal cells
- **Within 15 years** – Risk of coronary heart disease and death returns to nearly the level of people who have never smoked

So pick your Quit Day and start your journey to improved oral and overall health. If you need additional motivation, please reach out to a professional trained in tobacco cessation techniques such as a doctor, dentist or licensed mental health professional. Also, some health plans or employee assistance plans offer tobacco cessation programs that may fit your needs, so give them a call if you'd like to check.



Good luck and again, congratulations on taking this important step in improving your health.

1 – American Dental Association. *Oral Health Topics A-Z: Smoking (Tobacco) Cessation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*. Retrieved July, 20, 2009 from http://www.ada.org/public/topics/smoking_tobacco_faq.asp

2 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Reducing Tobacco Use: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2000.



"Cigna" is a registered service mark, and the "Tree of Life" logo and "GO YOU" are service marks, of Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc., licensed for use by Cigna Corporation and its operating subsidiaries. All products and services are provided by such operating subsidiaries and not by Cigna Corporation. Such operating subsidiaries include Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of Cigna Health Corporation and Cigna Dental Health, Inc. All models are used for illustrative purposes only.