



TOBACCO AND ORAL HEALTH

Extinguish the tobacco habit or watch your teeth fall out

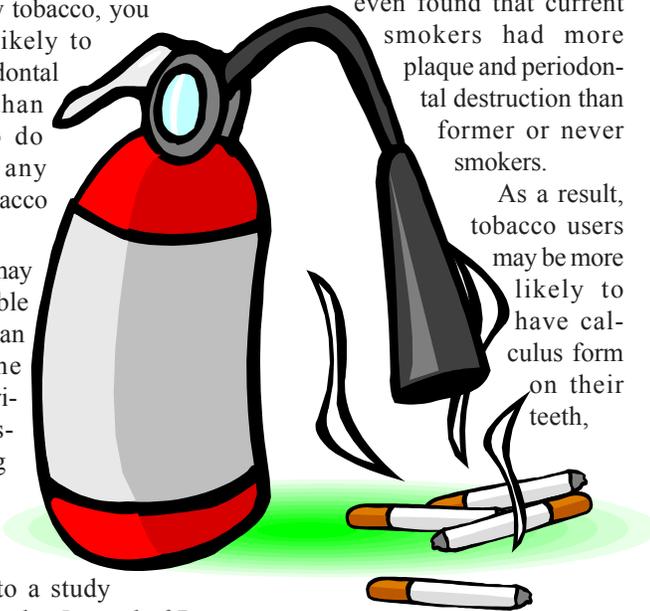
Whether you smoke cigarettes, cigars, pipe, or dip or chew tobacco, you are more likely to have periodontal disease than those who do not use any form of tobacco at all.

Smoking may be responsible for more than half of the cases of periodontal disease among adults in the United States, according to a study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* (JOP). The study found that current smokers are about four times more likely than people who have never smoked to have advanced periodontal disease.

Many chemicals found in tobacco, such as nicotine and tar

may have harmful effects on the periodontal tissues. One study even found that current smokers had more plaque and periodontal destruction than former or never smokers.

As a result, tobacco users may be more likely to have calculus form on their teeth,



have deeper pockets between the teeth and gums, and lose more of the bone and tissue that support the teeth. Loss of bone and tissue may potentially cause tooth loss.

Research shows that smokers loose more teeth than nonsmokers. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, only about 20 percent of people over age 65 who have never smoked are toothless, while a whopping 41.3 percent of daily smokers over age 65 are toothless.

If you're a smokeless tobacco user, you're not out of harm's way. In fact, you are also at a greater risk of having more severe and rapidly progressing periodontal disease, as well as receding gums. And, when gums recede to the point where the tooth roots are exposed, teeth may become susceptible to root cavities or sensitive to cold and touch – not to mention the fact that the chances of developing oral cancer increase with smokeless tobacco use.

For long-time users, the risk is much greater, making the use of snuff or chewing tobacco among young people a special concern.

Finally, for smokers, the good news is oral health will begin to improve once you quit smoking. The JOP study showed that 11 years after quitting, former smokers' likelihood of having periodontal disease was not significantly different from those who had never smoked. This is definitely an incentive to quit smoking, and the sooner you quit, the better off your oral health will be.

If you are a tobacco user remember the problems that occur with tobacco use, including oral cancer, bad breath, stained teeth, tooth loss, bone loss, loss of taste and smell, less success with periodontal treatment and dental implants, mouth sores and facial wrinkling. Be aware that periodontal disease is an infection that is not just a major cause of tooth loss, but is also linked to increased risk of heart disease, stroke, poorly controlled diabetes, respiratory disease and premature babies.

Kicking the Habit

Millions of Americans quit the addictive habit of tobacco use every year. The benefits of quitting include reducing the chances of developing cancer, lung and heart disease.

Tobacco use increases your risk for periodontal treatment complications and/or failure. It also reduces the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to gingival tissue, and will impair the body's defense mechanisms making you more susceptible to infections like periodontal disease.

To begin a tobacco-cessation

program, ask your periodontist or physician for help. Other tips to try include:

- Keeping oral substitutes handy such as carrots, apples, and sugarless gum.
- Brushing your teeth.
- Taking deep relaxing breaths.
- Spending time in places where smoking is prohibited.
- Talking to a friend for support.
- Changing your daily routine and staying busy.
- Going for a walk.

Quitting the habit is a huge commitment, but one that will give you a lifetime of results. ☺

For more information visit www.perio.org

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.