

## When you stop smoking ...

- Your **smile will stay whiter for longer**, as you won't have to worry about new tobacco stains on your teeth or dentures.
- You may **help prevent dry mouth** developing or getting worse. Having better saliva flow helps protect against tooth decay and helps get better suction under dentures.
- Your **breath may improve**.
- Your risk of infection reduces and your **mouth will heal better** after having a tooth out or having other dental surgery.
- Your **sense of taste may improve**. The longer you smoke, the more it damages your taste buds, dulling your sense of taste.

Avoid brushing harder or using smokers' toothpaste to remove stains, as this can damage the surface of your teeth or dentures. And if you use gum or mints to freshen your breath, make sure they are sugar-free.

 **When you stop smoking, these things improve.**

## For advice or practical help

### Talk to a health professional

Your oral health professional, general practitioner (GP) and pharmacist are trained to support you. Your GP or pharmacist can help you decide if you want to use Champix, Zyban or nicotine patches with nicotine lozenges, inhalator, mouth spray or gum to help manage your cravings. Your GP can help you access medications more cheaply through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

### Call the Quitline 13 7848

Quitline is a friendly, confidential telephone service. For the cost of a local call, trained Quitline counsellors provide tailored information and practical advice just for you.

Talking with a Quitline counsellor can increase your chance of quitting successfully. You can also ask your oral health professional or doctor for a referral for Quitline to call you.

Visit [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)



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oral health for better health

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Smoking and  
the health of your  
**mouth, teeth**  
and **gums**



## Smoking affects your **whole body** including your **mouth, teeth and gums.**

If you smoke, you increase your risk of serious gum problems and mouth cancer. You are more likely to have tooth decay and lose your teeth.

**There is no safe level of smoking.**

### **The good news is your body starts to recover the day you stop smoking.**

Stopping smoking improves the health of your mouth, teeth and gums. Over time your risk for mouth cancer and tooth loss will drop. It is very important to visit your oral health professional to keep your mouth healthy and to have regular mouth cancer checks, even if you don't have teeth.

### **Mouth cancer**

Mouth cancer can affect the lips, inside of cheeks, gums and tongue, and top and bottom of the mouth.

**If you smoke, you are over three times more likely to get mouth cancer than someone who doesn't smoke. Your risk increases more when you also drink alcohol.**

One in three people who get mouth cancer will die within five years. If found early, mouth cancer is more likely to be successfully treated. Mouth cancers are generally not painful in the early stages.

### **Visit your oral health professional straight away if you find:**

- sores or ulcers in your mouth that do not go away after two weeks
- any white or red patches in your mouth
- any lumps and swellings
- any changes in the way teeth or dentures fit together.

### **✔ Stopping smoking greatly lowers your risk of mouth cancer.**

In time your risk of mouth cancer will be close to that of someone who has never smoked.

### **Gum disease (Periodontal disease)**

Gum disease is caused by bacteria (plaque) that build up on teeth and along the gums. This bacteria damages the gums and can also damage the bone which holds the teeth in place. Serious gum disease can lead to tooth loss.

### **People who smoke lose more teeth through severe gum disease than people who don't smoke because:**

- it's easier to notice the early stages of gum disease in people who don't smoke which means it can be treated earlier
- smoking makes it harder for your body to fight gum infections caused by bacteria
- when you smoke, gums and bone don't heal as well and gum treatments don't work as well.

### **✔ Stopping smoking, keeping your teeth clean and regular hygiene visits with your oral health professional help prevent gum disease from getting worse.**



*"I was really surprised when my dentist said I had gum disease, as I'm really careful about cleaning my teeth. She said smoking made it harder for my gums to fight infection. I didn't realise how much damage had already been done. I'd been thinking about quitting for a while and decided I had to do something before it got worse. It's been hard, but my dentist can already see the improvement. Plus, food tastes so much better and I can enjoy eating out more with the money I used to spend on smokes."*



*"My oral health professional noticed a white patch inside my mouth. He said my smoking raised my chances of getting oral cancer. I've smoked since I left school. Luckily in my case it turned out to be nothing serious, but it was enough of a scare for me to get the help I needed to stop smoking. My mouth feels better and I love that my grandkids, who never liked my cigarette smell, hug me much more now."*