

Although rates of smoking have declined steadily since the 1970s, research shows that 24% of the UK adult population smoke. This is approximately 12.5 million people.

Smoking can lead to many different health issues and diseases and, in some instances, these can be fatal. Although most people are aware of the effect that smoking can have on their body and general health, many are unaware of the effects that smoking has on their mouths. Effects include:

- stained teeth
- bad breath (halitosis)
- tooth loss
- gum disease
- loss of taste and smell
- reduced blood supply to the mouth
- increased build-up of plaque and tartar on your teeth
- delayed healing following dental extractions and other oral surgery
- increased risk of oral cancer

How often should I visit my dentist?

Visit your dentist as often as they recommend. As well as checking your teeth, the dentist will check your cheeks, tongue and soft tissues. Any changes in the mouth can be picked up early by visiting your dentist regularly.

How will smoking affect my gums and teeth?

Smoking tobacco causes a lack of oxygen in your bloodstream, leading to infected gums not being able to heal. Smoking causes gum disease to progress faster than in non-smokers. Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

Why are my teeth stained?

One of the effects of smoking is staining of your teeth. This is caused by the tar and nicotine in the cigarettes. Smoking can make your teeth yellow very quickly and people who have smoked for many years often complain that their teeth are brown in colour. This is due to the staining from smoking tobacco.

What is the risk of developing oral cancer?

People who smoke are six times more likely than non-smokers to develop oral cancers. Approximately 90% of people with cancer of the mouth, tongue, lips, and throat use, or have used tobacco. The risk of developing these cancers significantly increases with the amount of tobacco smoked.

If you notice an ulcer that is not healing or suspicious lesions in your mouth you should contact your dentist or GP.

What are the benefits of giving up smoking?

- your breath will smell fresher
- you won't get any further cigarette-related staining of your teeth
- the health of your body and mouth should start to improve greatly
- Your senses of smell and taste will improve greatly
- Your breathing becomes easier
- A reduction in the risk of fatal diseases
- A reduction in the risk for others, caused by second-hand (passive) smoking
- You will save money

How can I quit smoking?

The nicotine in cigarettes is an extremely addictive substance. This is why breaking a smoking habit isn't easy. However, quitting smoking will be an important step in improving your oral and overall health.

There are many different ways of quitting smoking from support groups to nicotine replacement therapy products (NRT) such as:

- nicotine chewing gum
- patches
- nasal sprays
- inhalers
- lozenges

There is no evidence that using one method of nicotine replacement is more effective than another. There is strong evidence to show that using a combination of nicotine replacement therapies is more effective than using a single product alone.

For further advice and help to quit smoking please ask to speak to our onsite smoking advisors or contact your doctor, dentist, local pharmacist or local smoking cessation service.

Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or a
different format.

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The effect that smoking has
on your oral health

Maxillofacial Unit

