



# How smoking affects your mouth

## How does smoking damage my gums and teeth?

Healthy teeth need healthy gums. Smoking reduces blood flow to the gums, which both causes and hides the signs of gum disease. In fact, many smokers are not aware of how much gum disease they have.

Gum disease is both the inflammation of gums, and the loss of bone and tissue which surround and support your teeth. With no support, teeth loosen, become wobbly and cause pain, and may have to be extracted. Gum disease the major cause of adults losing their teeth.

If you smoke, you are about three times more likely to have gum disease than a non-smoker.

Smokers can also have more tooth decay than non-smokers. The nicotine in tobacco reduces saliva flow and some smokers can get dry mouth symptoms. The saliva of smokers is sometimes thicker which can mean it does not protect the teeth as well.



Smokers are more likely to lose their teeth than non-smokers.

## What effects does smoking cause in my mouth?

The most noticeable immediate effects of smoking are stained teeth and tongue, gum discolouration (also called smoker's melanosis), changes in the look of the roof of the mouth (palate), bad breath and a loss of taste and smell.

Smoking can also cause or worsen gum disease (also called periodontal disease) and increase your risk of mouth and lip cancer.

## I'm a smoker. Why do I get sores in my mouth that take a long time to heal?

The nicotine in cigarette smoke reduces blood flow to your mouth and gums, meaning cuts, ulcers or scratches heal more slowly. Nicotine also affects the way your immune system fights infections. This means that smoking also makes your recovery from many dental procedures much slower.



 **Quitline 13 7848**



dental health  
services victoria  
oral health for better health



# How smoking affects your mouth



Smoking can cause gum disease.

## Does smoking cause mouth and throat cancer?

Most people know that smoking causes lung cancer. But did you know smoking is one of the main causes of mouth cancer, too?

The risk of dying from mouth and throat cancer is about ten times more likely in male smokers and about five times more likely in female smokers, than in non-smokers.

Only half of people diagnosed with cancer in their mouths will be alive five years later.

Any lump, discoloured patch, ulcer or sore on the mouth, lip or tongue that doesn't heal within three weeks must be checked out by a dentist. The earlier a mouth cancer is found and treated, the longer the person is likely to survive.



Dental Health Services Victoria offers public dental care for Victorians who hold concession cards, and their dependants.

Visit the DHSV website

 [www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)

Follow us on Twitter

 @VicDental

Like us on Facebook

 DentalHealthVic

## How do I quit smoking and start repairing?

See your doctor, pharmacist or qualified health professional and get some help to quit. You can access information on quitting at:

 [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au), or call

 **Quitline 13 7848**

Quitting smoking, brushing and flossing your teeth regularly, and having regular dental check-ups will help you get back to a healthy mouth. Your gums will become healthier, food will smell and taste better, your breath will improve, and tooth staining and tooth loss can be reduced. After ten years of not smoking, you will have less than half the chance of getting oral cancer. Your risk gets less and less with time.



**dental health**  
**services victoria**

**oral health for better health**

