# Oral Health Effects of Tobacco and Benefits of Quitting

When counseling your patients on tobacco use, share these facts and cessation benefits to encourage them to quit.

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<th>Tobacco-Associated Condition</th>
<th>Health Facts</th>
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| **Oral Cancer**              | - Smoking is a leading cause of oral cancer. Smokers are 5–10 times more likely to develop oral cancer than non-smokers.\(^1\)  
- Smokeless tobacco has at least 28 known cancer-causing chemicals.\(^2\) | - 5 years after quitting smoking, the risk of developing oral cancer is cut in half.\(^3\) |
| **Leukoplakia**              | - Smoking and smokeless tobacco can lead to leukoplakia, a condition in which thickened white patches form on the gums and other areas in the mouth. These can be precancerous.\(^1\) | - Quitting smoking and smokeless tobacco can reduce the risk of developing leukoplakia lesions.\(^1,4\) |
| **Periodontal Disease**      | - Smokers are 3–4 times more likely to have periodontitis, an inflammation of the gum and/or bone that surround the tooth which can lead to excess bleeding of the gums and tooth loss.\(^5\)  
- After treatment for gum disease, smokers do not heal as well as nonsmokers.\(^5\) | - Quitting smoking reduces the risk of periodontal disease over time.\(^7\) |
| **Smoker's Melanosis**       | - Smoking can lead to melanosis, a darkening of the gums.\(^6\) | - Within 3 months after quitting, the darkening will, in most cases, disappear.\(^8\) |
| **Other Effects**            | - Smoking contributes to the discoloration of teeth, restorations and dentures.\(^6\)  
- Smoking is a common cause of bad breath and dry mouth, and can decrease the ability to taste and smell.\(^6,9\)  
- Smokers who undergo oral surgery and placement of dental implants may have delayed wound healing.\(^10\)  
- Tobacco users are more likely to develop hairy tongue, a condition in which the tongue has a dark, furry appearance.\(^5\) (see image)  
- The high sugar content in smokeless tobacco can lead to tooth decay in exposed roots.\(^6,11\)  
- Smoking is an expensive addiction that causes up to one-third of all cancer deaths, as well as disease in the lung, heart and rest of the body.\(^3\) | - Shortly after quitting smoking, breath smells better, and the sense of taste and smell improves.  
- In addition to oral health benefits, quitting smoking can save money and reduce the risk of serious disease, including many cancers and heart disease. |


9 Thomson, WM, Lawrence, HP, Broadbent, JM, Poulton, R. The Impact of Xerostomia on Oral-Health-Related Quality of Life among Younger Adults. Health Qual Life Outcomes. 2006;4:86.
