



Helping Hands

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TOBACCO AND SMOKING

Your smile is one of the first things people notice! The use of smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or marijuana can drastically affect your dental health as well as your overall health. Tobacco, whether smokeless or not, is known to cause countless changes in the body, including the mouth, and is known to contain over 28 cancer causing toxins. Some of the systemic health and dental effects are listed below:

SMOKING TOBACCO: Tobacco products that are burned for inhalation can harm nearly every organ in the body and reduce the overall health of the smoker. Examples of products include cigarettes, cigars, pipe, and hookah.

Health Risks: Heart disease, blood clots, stroke, respiratory disease such as COPD and emphysema, and cancer (including lung, esophagus, kidney, larynx, liver, pancreas, stomach, and tracheal).

Dental Risks: Oral cancer, premalignant lesions, bad breath, discoloration of the teeth, increased buildup of plaque and tartar/calculus on the teeth, increased loss of bone within the mouth and jaw, delayed healing process/complications following dental treatment, gum disease (a leading cause of tooth loss), inflammation of salivary glands, brown patches on the gums, and hairy tongue (thickening of the tissues on the tongue giving it a dark "hair-like" appearance).

SMOKELESS TOBACCO: Tobacco users that use products that are chewed or snuffed are 50 TIMES more likely to develop oral cancer than those who do not use smokeless tobacco. Leukoplakia is also a very common oral lesion found in users of smokeless tobacco. Leukoplakia is a precancerous white/grey patch on the oral tissues that cannot be wiped away. Products include dip, snuff, spitting tobacco, and chewing tobacco.

Health Risks: Heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, cancer (esophageal and pancreas)

Dental Risks: Increased risk of cavities, gum recession, cavities on the roots of the teeth which leads to periodontal surgeries in this area, tooth sensitivity, tooth loss, staining of the teeth, oral cancer, wearing down of the teeth, and leukoplakia.

HOOKAH/SHISHA: Smoking hookah may seem like a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes, however, it has been found that a 1 hour long hookah session is equivalent to smoking 100-200 cigarettes.

Health Risks: Heart disease, coronary artery disease, respiratory disease, cancer (lungs, bladder, esophagus, kidney, larynx, liver, and tracheal).

Dental Risks: Oral cancer, increased risk of cavities, gum disease, oral herpes, and the same cancers as smoking tobacco/cigarettes.

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES (E-CIGARETTES): E-cigarettes are a popular new battery-operated tobacco product that have largely unknown health effects. It is known that E-cigarettes deliver the same cancer causing agents as traditional cigarettes but in higher quantities.

Health Risks: Heart disease, coronary artery disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, and cancer (lung, stomach, bladder, and esophageal).

Dental Risks: Gum disease and infections, gum recession, periodontal disease, grinding/wearing away of teeth, bad breath, yellowing of the teeth, plaque buildup, and tooth loss.

MARIJUANA: Marijuana is a hemp plant with high levels of THC that is either smoked or ingested. It is a well-known fact that use of marijuana leads to tachycardia (rapid heart rate) and vasodilation (widening of blood vessels resulting in decreased blood pressure). Paired with epinephrine, often used during dental procedures, these effects can raise to life-threatening levels. New studies also show that there may be a link between cannabis use and HPV-positive oral cancer.

Health Risks: Decreased testosterone levels in men, alteration in senses, impaired body movement, affects in brain development, long-term reduction in memory, learning, and brain function, breathing problems, increased heart rate, temporary hallucinations and paranoia, and an increased risk of developing mental health problems.

Dental Risks: Gingivitis, white patches on the gums, bone loss, gingival overgrowth, oral cancer, dry mouth, and increased risk of cavities.