

# ORAL HEALTH & SMOKING



## Key Messages for Patients and the Public

### Overview

Smoking and the use of all smokeless products such as chewing tobacco and snuff have been linked to cancer and other serious oral health conditions.

### The Link between Smoking and Oral Health

- People who smoke are five to nine times more likely than those who do not smoke to develop laryngeal, esophageal, and pharyngeal cancers and cancers of the lip, cheek and gum. <sup>1,2,3</sup>
- In Canada, oral cancer is almost 3 times more common than cervical cancer and twice as common as liver cancer. <sup>4</sup>
- People who use chewing tobacco or snuff, have a 50% increased risk of getting cancer of the gums, cheeks, and inner lining of the lips compared to non-tobacco users. <sup>1,5</sup> People who use snuff for many years are 50 times more likely to get cancer of the cheek or gum than people who do not use these products. <sup>1</sup>
- Using smokeless products like snuff or chewing tobacco can cause gingival recession, gum (periodontal) disease <sup>6</sup> and oral leukoplakia. Leukoplakia are white spots or lesions on the inside of the cheeks, gums or tongue that can become cancerous. <sup>1</sup>
- Smoking causes bad breath (halitosis), stained teeth, stained tongue, and delayed healing after dental surgery. <sup>6</sup> Smoking is also the major cause of periodontitis, <sup>10</sup> a gum disease that may cause damage to the jaw bone resulting in the loss of teeth. People who smoke are about three times more likely than those who do not smoke to have severe periodontitis. <sup>8</sup> Untreated, periodontitis increases the risk of more serious diseases, including respiratory disease. <sup>7</sup>
- Oral cancer and other diseases of the gums and mouth can be prevented if people stop smoking and avoid using smokeless products like chewing tobacco and snuff.
- Researchers believe that the incidence and death rate of oral cancer has declined since 1998 because fewer people smoke. <sup>9</sup>

### Helpful Resources

- Canadian Dental Association [www.cda-adc.ca](http://www.cda-adc.ca)
- Canadian Dental Hygienists Association [www.cdha.ca](http://www.cdha.ca)
- Office of the Chief Dental Officer [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/fnihb-dgspni/ocdo-bdc/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/fnihb-dgspni/ocdo-bdc/index-eng.php)

## References

1. Cullen, J.W., Blot, W., Henningfield, J., Boyd, G., Mecklenburg, R., and Massey, M.M. (1986 July-August). Health Consequences of Using Smokeless Tobacco: Summary of the Advisory Committee's Report to the Surgeon General. *Public Health Reports*, 101,355-373.
2. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004). *Smoking and Tobacco Use: 2004 Surgeon General's Report*. Retrieved March 28, 2011 from <[http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/2004/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2004/index.htm)>
3. Neville, B. W. and Day, T. A. (2002), Oral Cancer and Precancerous Lesions. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, 52,195–215. doi: 10.3322/canjclin.52.4.195
4. Health Canada. (2009) *Oral Cancer*. Retrieved June 16, 2011 from <<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/oral-bucco/disease-maladie/cancer-eng.php>>
5. Canadian Cancer Society. (2011). Risk factors for oral cancer. *Canadian Cancer Encyclopedia*. Retrieved June 16, 2011 from <[http://info.cancer.ca/cce-ecc/default.aspx?Lang=E&ccid=6610&sc\\_lang=en](http://info.cancer.ca/cce-ecc/default.aspx?Lang=E&ccid=6610&sc_lang=en)>
6. American Dental Association. (1995-2011). *Oral Health Topics: Smoking and Tobacco Cessation*. Retrieved March 28, 2011 from <<http://www.ada.org/5170.aspx?currentTab=1>>
7. Health Canada. (2009). *The Effects of Oral Health on Overall Health*. Retrieved June 16, 2011 from <<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/dent-eng.php>>
8. Johnson, G.K., Slach, N.A. (2001 April). Impact of Tobacco Use on Periodontal Status. *Journal of Dental Education*, 65(4), 313-321.
9. Canadian Cancer Society's Steering Committee on Cancer Statistics. (2011 May). *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2011*. Toronto: Canadian Cancer Society, 38. Retrieved June 16, 2011 from <<http://www.cancer.ca/~media/CCS/Canada%20wide/Files%20List/English%20files%20heading/PDF%20-%20Policy%20-%20Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%20-%20English/Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%202011%20-%20English.ashx>>
10. Tomar, S.L., Asma, S. (2000). Smoking-attributable periodontitis in the United States: findings from NHANES III. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. *Journal of Periodontology*, May, 71(5):743-51.