TOBACCO USE AND PERIO HEALTH

A tobacco-free life can improve overall health, including oral health. Using tobacco has been linked to the development and progression of periodontal (gum) disease.

How is tobacco use related to periodontal disease?
- Tobacco use increases calculus, the hard substance on teeth that can only be removed during professional cleanings.
- Calculus contains bacteria that release toxins, which cause infection, inflammation and potential destruction of periodontal tissue.
- Pockets form between gums and teeth, allowing in more bacteria that destroy tissue and supporting bone.
- Without treatment, teeth may loosen and fall out.

Why are periodontal diseases harder to detect and treat in tobacco users?
- Nicotine and other chemicals in tobacco mask the symptoms of periodontal diseases.
- Smokers' bodies have weaker defense mechanisms because smoking reduces oxygen and nutrient delivery to the gums and bone tissues.
- Smokers will have a slower healing process, causing periodontal treatment results to be harder to predict.

What other conditions are caused by tobacco use?
- Oral and lip cancer
- Stained teeth
- Bad breath
- Facial wrinkling
- Loss of taste and smell
- Mouth sores and spots
- Black, hairy tongue

What can you do to stop smoking and improve your periodontal health?

By quitting smoking, you can gradually erase its harmful effects on your periodontal health. A smoking cessation program is the first step toward quitting. Other tips people find helpful to stop smoking include:
- Find a stop-smoking program, or other support group.
- Choose a stress-free time to quit.
- Ask family, friends and colleagues for support and encouragement.
- Exercise every day if possible, to relieve stress and get healthier.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and get plenty of rest.
- Eat healthier snacks such as carrots, apples and sugarless gum.
- Spend more time in places where smoking is prohibited.

If you have any questions about periodontal disease, we'll be happy to provide answers.