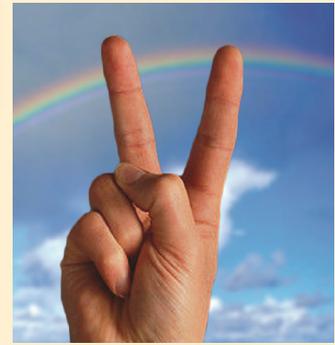


Patient Page

Guide to quitting smoking

- ◆ How does smoking affect oral health?
- ◆ How can you quit smoking?
- ◆ How can you stay smoke-free?



How does smoking affect oral health?

Smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes, or chewing tobacco, exposes you to chemicals that reduce the body's defences and healing ability, and increase your risk of many diseases including **lung cancer**, **heart attack**, and **stroke**.

Effects of smoking on the mouth include bad breath, stained teeth and tongue, mouth/lip/tongue cancer, elevated risk of gum (periodontal) disease, and reduced sense of taste. Visit a dentist if you have any of the following:

- Signs of **mouth cancer** include sores that do not heal; pain, numbness, or tenderness; lumps or rough patches; spots or patches that are no longer pink; difficulty in chewing, swallowing, or speaking; and a changed bite.
- Signs of **gum disease** include bleeding or swollen gums; receding gums and exposed tooth roots, which are prone to decay and heat/cold sensitivity; and loose teeth or loss of teeth.

How can you quit smoking?

Benefits of quitting include **improved oral and overall health**, **reduced risk of tobacco-related diseases**, **improved health of others** (because "passive smoking" also stops), **a healthier baby** if you are pregnant, and **saved time and money**. Quitting needs not just will power, but also careful, realistic planning. Some suggested steps are shown in the **Box**.

It would also help to avoid alcohol; throw away cigarettes, ashtrays, and lighters; remove cigarette smells and stay in tobacco-free areas; reduce and manage stress; have regular, healthy meals; and get enough sleep.

Be prepared to find ways, or seek professional help, to cope with the temporary symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, such as craving, digestion problems, dizziness, irritability, and anxiety. Nicotine replacement therapy can help in quitting.

How can you stay smoke-free?

Persevere, say "**I can do it**", and keep reminding yourself of your motivators. Stay smoke-free one day at a time and reward yourself daily. Plan to buy something with the money you save, and celebrate on target dates and on your quit anniversary. It may take more than one attempt to quit; when planning the next attempt, learn from experience, talk to family or friends, re-examine smoking triggers, and decide on a different method or combination of methods of coping. Local support, consulting services, and resources are available to help you:

- Hong Kong Department of Health Smoking Cessation Hotline: **1833 183**; Hospital Authority Smoking Counselling and Cessation Programme Hotline (Quitline): **2300 7272**; HKU Smoking Reduction Hotline: **2819 2697**; HKU Female Smoking Cessation Hotline: **2819 2692**; HKU Youth Quitline: **2855 9557**
- Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health website: <http://smokefree.hk> (Chinese) or <http://smokefree.hk/en/home> (English); Tobacco Control Office, Hong Kong Department of Health website: www.tco.gov.hk

Sources: American Dental Association, <www.ada.org>; National Health Service, UK, <www.smokefree.nhs.uk>; Hong Kong Government Tooth Club, <www.toothclub.gov.hk>

Written by Trevor Lane, DPhil; edited by Xiao-li Gao, BDS, PhD. This Patient Page is for general informational use and is not a substitute for diagnosis; for specific oral health advice, please consult a dentist.

Tips to quit smoking

- ◆ **List motivators** to stop smoking (breathing better, long-term health, family, money, etc), which you can use as a daily reminder
- ◆ **List smoking triggers** (times of day, places, situations, etc)
 - (1) Plan to **avoid** those triggers
 - (2) Cope with triggers by **beginning new habits** like deep breathing, walking, drinking water, chewing sugar-free gum, eating fruit or vegetables, or talking to someone; visualise or practise these before your chosen quit date
- ◆ **Choose a stress-free quit date**; take one day at a time and **record your progress** or keep a diary
- ◆ **Get support**: tell family, friends, and colleagues you are quitting; talk to a health professional; join a support group; get professional counselling and advice on nicotine or non-nicotine therapies

