

## What are some signs of oral cancer?

### Signs and symptoms that could indicate oral cancer include:

- Any sign of irritation like tenderness, burning or a sore that will not heal.
- Pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or lips.
- Development of a lump, wrinkled or bumpy patch inside your mouth.
- Color changes to the inside of your mouth (gray, red or white spots rather than a healthy pink color).
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, or moving your mouth.
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together.

**See your dentist or physician if you notice any of these changes.**

For more information on the health effects of tobacco use and nicotine dependence treatment services available, contact your local health clinic.

**Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium**  
Division of Community Health Services  
Office of Alaska Native Health Research  
Nicotine Research and Control Program  
4201 Tudor Centre Drive, Suite 105  
Anchorage, AK 99508

For more information or to order materials,  
contact ANTHC at  
(907) 729-1301

*Check out our website: [www.anthc.org](http://www.anthc.org)*

Sources: [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) • [www.smokingstinks-aaco.org](http://www.smokingstinks-aaco.org)  
*American Journal of Public Health 9/93 p.1271*

Cont/Prep • Health Education Committee 1/4/04

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation jointly own and manage the Alaska Native Medical Center under the terms of Public Law 105-83. These parent organizations have established a Joint Operating Board to ensure unified operation of health services provided by the Medical Center.

## Dental Effects of Tobacco Use



Patient Education



## What effects can smoking and chewing tobacco have on my oral health?

- Use of any tobacco product can increase your risk of developing oral cancer and gum disease.
- Tobacco use can lead to poor dental health among older adults, including:
  - Tooth loss*
  - Gum disease*
  - Cavities*
- Smoking and chewing tobacco products damage your gums.
- Tobacco use may cause a receding gum line, which exposes the tooth roots. This may increase:
  - Sensitivity to hot and cold*
  - Tooth decay*
  - Tooth loss*
- Using tobacco can also give you:
  - Bad breath*
  - Stains on your teeth*
  - Tartar build-up*
  - Growths on your tongue, making it look hairy and turning it yellow, green, brown or black*



*Tobacco use can cause your gums to pull away from your teeth and never grow back. Eventually your teeth fall out.*

*Tobacco use can cause growths on your tongue, making it look hairy and turning it yellow, green, brown or black.*



- Tobacco use reduces the blood flow through small blood vessels in the mouth.
- Tobacco use slows healing time after injury or surgery.
- Tobacco use lowers ability for blood clots to form after tooth removal, causing dry sockets.

*Stopping tobacco use is hard. Keep trying — it takes the average person 5-7 attempts before they quit for good. It is the best thing you can do for your health and the health of your family.*

- If you use both tobacco and alcohol, there is an even greater risk for oral cancer.
- Chew may also contain sand and grit that can wear down your teeth.
- Chew contains sugar and increases your risk for cavities.
- Cancer-causing chemicals found in chew can lead to oral cancer.
- Leukoplakia, which is a warning sign for cancer, appears as a white patch inside the mouth.



*Leukoplakia, a warning sign of cancer, appears as a white patch in the mouth. See your dentist if you notice any of these changes.*