

APRIL

Building better habits

Alcohol, tobacco and oral health:
What you should know



It's not just your liver and lungs that are compromised by alcohol and tobacco. Your mouth can also suffer. Here are simple ways to improve your oral and overall health.

Cheers to a healthier mouth

When you drink alcohol, you make less saliva, which means cavity-causing plaque can stay on your teeth for longer.* People with alcohol use disorder are more likely to:*

- ▶ Have higher plaque levels
- ▶ Experience permanent tooth loss – three times more likely
- ▶ Suffer from oral cancer – alcohol misuse is the second-leading cause

Here's how you can limit alcohol's impact on your oral health*

- ▶ Consider lighter-colored drinks to limit your exposure to chromogens, which stain your teeth.
- ▶ Avoid chewing ice or adding citrus.
- ▶ Get a dental check-up twice per year. That way, your dentist can clean your teeth and catch any issues when they're still small. Be honest about your alcohol consumption.
- ▶ Drink water. It helps keep you hydrated and stop plaque from building up on your teeth. Plus, most tap water contains fluoride.

You can be tobacco-free

Smoking can cause:**

- ▶ Gum disease, which can lead to tooth loss
- ▶ Oral cancer
- ▶ Bad breath
- ▶ Tooth discoloration
- ▶ Leukoplakia (white patches inside the mouth)
- ▶ Loss of bone in the jaw



Tobacco in any form is damaging to your oral health**

Vaping, chewing tobacco, cigars and pipes all pose similar problems. Quit today at [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov).

*Carey, Elea. Healthline. "What Does Alcohol Do to Your Teeth?." November 2017. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dental-and-oral-health/what-does-alcohol-do-to-your-teeth>. **Friedman, Michael. Smoking and Oral Health. WebMD, 11 Oct. 2019, www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health#2.

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