

# 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, and smoking cigars and pipes all pose similar problems. Quit today at [smokefree.gov](https://smokefree.gov).

\*Carey, Elea. (2018, September). "What Does Alcohol Do to Your Teeth?" Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dental-and-oral-health/what-does-alcohol-do-to-your-teeth>. \*\*WebMD. (2019, October 11). "Smoking and Oral Health." [www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health#2](https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health#2).

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