

# 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.<sup>1</sup> People that drink a substantial amount of alcohol are more likely to:

- Experience tooth decay due to the sugar and acidity of alcohol beverages<sup>1</sup>
- Have an accumulation of bad bacteria leading to gum disease<sup>2</sup>
- Are more likely to experience tooth loss<sup>1</sup>

### Here's how you can maintain your oral health if you drink alcohol<sup>3</sup>

- Drink responsibly and in moderation by balancing your consumption with a healthy lifestyle.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after ingesting alcohol to reduce the impact of sugars and acids on your teeth.
- Brush and floss your teeth daily to prevent tartar and plaque build-up and reduce stains.
- Visit your dentist regularly to help reduce tartar and reduce the risk of tooth decay. Dentists may be able to catch any issues early when they're still small.

### You can be tobacco-free

Smoking can cause:<sup>4</sup>

- 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://www.smokefree.gov).



**Schedule a check-up today.**

Regular cleanings help to keep your mouth healthy. Find an in-network dentist at [myCigna.com](https://myCigna.com).

1. Penn Dental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania. "Alcohol and Oral Health: What You Need to Know." June 25, 2023. <https://pennidentalmedicine.org/blog/is-alcohol-bad-for-your-teeth/#:~:text=Alcohol%20and%20Dry%20Mouth,swallowing%2C%20and%20a%20sore%20throat>. Last accessed February 13, 2025.

2. University Periodontal Associates. "Unveiling the Link Between Alcohol Consumption and Gum Disease: Causes and Prevention." February 2024. <https://gums-houston.com/unveiling-the-link-between-alcohol-consumption-and-gum-disease-causes-and-prevention/>. Last accessed January 13, 2025.

3. Cigna Healthcare. "How Does Alcohol Affect Your Oral Health." October 2023. <https://www.cigna.com/knowledge-center/alcohol-teeth-and-oral-health>. Last accessed December 30, 2024.

4. U.S. Food & Drug Administration. "How Tobacco Use Affects Oral Health." November 19, 2024. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-effects-tobacco-use/how-tobacco-use-affects-oral-health>. Last accessed January 13, 2025.

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