

# Tobacco, alcohol & recreational drugs: How do they affect your oral health?

## **Did you know tobacco, alcohol and recreational drugs can affect your oral health?**

The use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, ecstasy, amphetamines, methamphetamines, (smoked methamphetamine in particular), heroin and replacement therapies such as methadone can:

- > damage the gum tissues causing inflammation and periodontal disease (gum disease)
- > cause decay
- > contribute to bad breath
- > cause staining of teeth, tongue and gums and make them appear yellow or black
- > contribute to the build-up of tartar on teeth
- > lead to tooth loss by affecting the bone supporting teeth and gums
- > limit saliva production causing dry mouth which can increase the risk of tooth decay, gum disease and erosion of the tooth enamel.

Tobacco contains chemicals which cause cancer, and is a major risk factor associated with oral cancer. Excessive consumption of alcohol significantly raises the risk of oral cancer which is increased even more when combined with smoking tobacco and marijuana.

Ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine and methamphetamine use can lead to tooth grinding and jaw clenching (also known as bruxism) which can cause:

- > tooth wear
- > cracked and broken teeth and
- > nerve damage.

## **Excessive use of drugs and alcohol can reduce your ability to maintain good oral hygiene and good oral health.**

Binge drinking may cause vomiting. If vomiting does occur:

- > rinse your mouth with water
- > rub toothpaste on the teeth with a finger to remineralise the tooth enamel and to freshen the mouth
- > do not use a toothbrush for at least 30 minutes after vomiting.

## How to keep your mouth healthy

- > Brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Spit the toothpaste out, but don't rinse.
- > Plain tap water should be the drink of choice. Plain milk is also a good choice.
- > Limit foods and drinks high in added sugars.
- > Choose healthy foods and drinks for snacks such as fruits, vegetables and reduced fat dairy products.
- > Chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow and help protect teeth from decay.

## It's never too late to seek help.....

Your dentist can help you achieve better oral health



If you are a smoker, then think about quitting. Call the Quitline on 13 78 48.

If you notice any changes in your mouth such as sores that don't heal, or red or white patches on your lips or in your mouth, contact your dentist or doctor immediately.

For confidential telephone support call:

- > Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 1300 131 340

People who use recreational drugs can seek further information and support from

- > Drug and Alcohol Services SA at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa)

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## For more information

SA Dental Service  
GPO Box 864  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Tel: 1300 008 222  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/sadental](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/sadental)

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