

Resource

Effects of Smoking on Gums

Smoking is a major risk factor for RA, and heavy smoking more than doubles the risk. It is also the number one risk factor for gum disease, which people with RA are already more susceptible to.

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Smoking and RA

Smoking is a major risk factor for RA, and heavy smoking more than doubles the risk. If you have RA and you are a smoker, the following information, taken from 'Action on Smoking & Health (Scotland)' is important to be aware of:

- Smoking can cause the body to produce antibodies which are strongly associated with the development of RA.
- Smoking is associated with the most severe forms of RA.
- People with RA who smoke may have a higher risk of heart disease and lung cancer.
- Smoking can make RA medication less effective, and people with early RA who smoke are 50% less likely to respond to treatment.
- Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your RA.

Smoking and gum disease

- Smoking is the number one risk factor for gum disease.
- Smoking may change the type of bacteria in dental plaque, increasing the number of bacteria that are more harmful.
- Smoking reduces the blood flow in the gums and supporting tissues of the tooth and makes them more likely to become inflamed.
- Gum disease will get worse more quickly in smokers than in non-smokers. Due to reduced blood flow, smokers may not get the warning symptoms of bleeding gums as much as non-smokers.
- Smoking e-cigarettes ('vaping') can lead to an imbalance in mouth bacteria and can worsen gum disease
- Gum disease remains the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

What can I do to stop smoking?

The sooner you can cut down the number of cigarettes smoked with a view to giving up, the quicker you will notice the health benefits. It is never too late to quit.

Help is available via your GP or dentist and also through the [NHS stop smoking campaign](#).

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