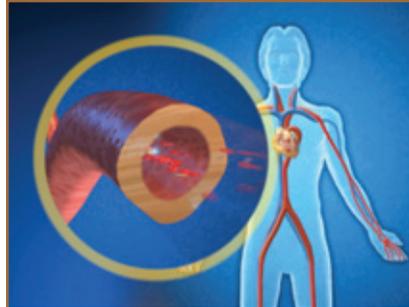# Smoking and Periodontal Disease

By now almost everyone knows that smoking has been linked with lung disease, cancer, and heart disease. But most people aren't aware that smokers are three to six times more likely to have periodontal disease, and two times more likely to lose teeth.

Smoking contributes to gum disease

Smoking constricts blood flow

Consider quitting

Periodontal disease

Periodontal disease is an infection of the teeth, gums, and the bone that surrounds your teeth. It's caused by the bacteria that live in plaque, the sticky film of food and bacteria that forms constantly on your teeth. The bacteria infect the tooth roots and cause pockets of infection to form in the gums.

The bacteria also produce toxins, and these toxins, combined with your body's reaction to them, destroy the bone around your teeth.

Periodontal disease and smoking

Smoking helps cause periodontal disease in two ways: it reduces the production of saliva, and it damages the body's ability to fight off infection.

Saliva is necessary for oral health because it helps wash bacteria from the teeth, so less saliva means more plaque. Saliva also contains disease-fighting antibodies that help fight destructive bacteria in the mouth.

Smoking damages your immune system by causing blood vessels to constrict throughout your entire body. This constriction reduces the flow of infection-fighting white blood cells, oxygen, and nutrients to the gums, making them more susceptible to infection.

Besides contributing to the onset of periodontal disease, continuing to smoke after periodontal treatment makes it much harder for your gums to heal. So if you haven't yet thought about quitting smoking, you should consider it now. By becoming a nonsmoker you can strengthen the fight against periodontal disease and keep your teeth.