

MEDIA RELEASE

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TRYING TO QUIT SMOKING? YOUR DENTIST CAN HELP.

The Ontario Dental Association is calling on Ontarians to give up tobacco today

Toronto, ON — April is Oral Health Month and the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) is focusing on tobacco cessation — it's never too late to quit. According to the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), 15 percent of adults in Ontario are smokers — that's over 2.2 million people.

Deciding to stop smoking is the best decision you can make for your health, and your dentist can help improve your chances of success. Dentists play a key role in protecting your oral health, and they are also a valuable asset in the battle to quit smoking.

"Every day in Ontario, dentists help patients quit smoking by offering support and encouragement," says Dr. Harry Höediono, President of the ODA. "Dentists can also prescribe stop-smoking medications, where helpful, and explain the oral and overall health benefits of quitting today."

Four out of 10 smokers will attempt to quit during the course of a year, but the withdrawal symptoms of nicotine are so severe that many will fail on their first attempt.

"Nicotine addiction involves psychological and physical factors, so tobacco cessation intervention requires a systematic approach — assessing the patient's readiness, motivating health behaviour change and developing a co-operative treatment plan," says Dr. Peter Selby, Clinical Director, Addiction Programs at CAMH. "Dentists are in a unique position to intervene early on because they can actually see the damage tobacco does to the mouth. For example, tobacco use is associated with mouth cancer, and the dentist is able to detect early changes, such as leukoplakia (lesions)."

As the experts in oral health care, dentists can easily spot the damage tobacco does to the mouth and teeth — smokers tend to suffer from bad breath, stained teeth and dry mouth. People who smoke are also three times more likely to have severe periodontitis (gum disease) than non-smokers. Oral diseases associated with smoking are more obvious to the eye than other conditions and that gives dentists an advantage over other health-care professionals in identifying patients who use tobacco — and starting the conversation about quitting.

"I am asking people who use any form of tobacco – cigarettes, cigars or smokeless tobacco – to ask their dentist for help in quitting today" says Dr. Höediono. "It is a difficult thing to do, but every attempt you make to quit is one step closer to success."

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For further information, visit www.youroralhealth.ca.

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