



## PRESS RELEASE

### *No Smoking Day - 14 March 2001*

#### ***“Smokers have worse Periodontal (Gum) Disease and lose teeth earlier!”***

For many years it has been recognised that tobacco smoking has harmful effects on our general health. In the mouth it is known that smoking is linked with white patches and oral cancer (*Palmer, 1988*). Research over the past 20 years has also shown that cigarette smoking has a significant effect on the periodontal (gum) tissues.

Gum diseases are extremely common and affect more than 90% of us at some stage. However, smokers have significantly worse gum disease than non-smokers and lose teeth earlier (*Haber et al. 1993*).

Studies have reported that smokers are 5-7 times more likely to suffer the effects of severe periodontal disease.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of gum disease?**

These are variable but may include:

- Bleeding on tooth brushing
- Red, swollen and possibly tender gums
  - Persistent bad breath
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth (pocketing)
  - Receding gums (getting long in the tooth)
- Loose teeth or teeth that are changing position
  - Pus or discharge around the gums
- A change in the way the teeth bite together

**The British Society of Periodontology** is a registered charity dedicated to promote gum health awareness for the benefit of the public. It also plays a significant part in educating dentists and hygienists.

We are currently highlighting the importance of regular dental check-ups, including gum screening, good oral hygiene and quitting smoking in the fight against gum disease.

### **Smoking and periodontal (gum) disease**

Numerous dental studies have shown that smokers:

- Have more severe gum disease than non-smokers
- Have deeper periodontal pockets and more loss of gum and bone support

- Have greater tooth loss and this tends to occur at a younger age
  - Respond less well to all types of periodontal treatment
  - Are more likely to suffer recurrent periodontal problems

Surprisingly, smoking can disguise the superficial signs and symptoms of active gum inflammation such as bleeding and so smokers may be unaware that there is a problem. (*Feldman et al. 1983; Preber & Bergström 1985*).

## Quitting tobacco smoking

Current research indicates that ex-smokers tend to have gum health intermediate between never smokers and current smokers (*Bergström et al. 1991*). However, a very important finding is that former smokers can respond as well to periodontal treatment as non-smokers (*Grossi et al. 1996*). Within a few months of quitting smoking the appearance and health of the gums improve with treatment. Quitting smoking is therefore beneficial.

## Conclusions

For all these good reasons the British Society of Periodontology strongly supports No Smoking Day. We recognise that quitting smoking is not easy but it is a vital part of periodontal health.

For further information on gum disease or the effects of smoking on your gum health either talk to your dentist or contact the British Society of Periodontology web-site at [www.bsperio.org](http://www.bsperio.org)

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## Notes to Editors:

Thank you for helping to highlight the important links between gum disease and tobacco smoking on National No Smoking Day.

If you require additional information about any aspects of this press release please contact Dr Amanda Biddle, BSP Press Officer, on telephone number: 01329 668261 or e-mail: [AmandaBiddle@cs.com](mailto:AmandaBiddle@cs.com)