

# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

Try these 6 healthy habits to limit holiday stress and its negative effects on your health. Plus, find out why cigars can be just as dangerous as cigarettes and get tips for discouraging your kids from using tobacco.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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## Put a Stop to Holiday Stress



**The on-the-go holiday season whirlwind of events and celebrations can send your stress level through the roof—and stress can lead to a variety of overall health and oral health problems.**

Studies have shown that gum disease and bruxism (tooth grinding) may be linked to high levels of stress. When you're anxious or depressed, your body produces more of the hormone cortisol, which can contribute to the risk for gum disease. People who grind their teeth tend to do it more when under stress. Grinding can wear and chip teeth and put pressure on jaw muscles and joints.

In addition, hard times can often lead to bad-for-your-teeth habits like smoking, drinking alcohol, and skipping your nightly brushing and flossing.

Follow these tips to keep your mouth—and your whole self—healthy and stress-free:

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise on a regular basis.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, stretching, and deep breathing.
- Brush and floss daily.
- Remember that some things, like the weather, are out of your hands and are not worth getting worked up about.

Enjoy your holidays—don't stress out about them!

# WHY CIGARS CAN BE JUST AS DANGEROUS AS CIGARETTES



Some people view cigar smoking as a glamorous luxury and purchase premium products for cigar evenings. After years of decline, annual cigar consumption nearly doubled from 6.2 billion cigars in 2000 to 12 billion in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Once largely the domain of older men, cigar smoking is now also popular with teens, as 7.7% of high school students report smoking cigars, including 6.3% of female students.<sup>2</sup> In fact, a higher percentage of high school students than adults say they smoke cigars, with flavored cigars likely driving youth appeal.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, this habit can lead to numerous oral health problems that damage your smile and overall health.

## Cigars can harm your oral health.

More than 75% of people diagnosed with oral cancer after age 50 use or have used tobacco.<sup>4</sup> Regular cigar smokers also increase their risk for other serious oral health problems.

- Cigar smokers are 4 to 10 times more likely to die from cancers of the mouth (esophagus and larynx) than non-smokers.<sup>5</sup>
- They often have badly stained teeth and chronic bad breath.
- Smoking cigars triples their rate of developing moderate to severe gum disease.<sup>6</sup>
- On average, cigar smokers have four missing teeth.<sup>6</sup>

Smoking cigars can become an addictive habit, with teens being the most vulnerable to nicotine addiction.

## Cigars contain more tobacco than cigarettes.

While cigarette tobacco is wrapped in paper, cigar tobacco is wrapped in more tobacco, often a tobacco leaf. A large cigar can contain as much tobacco as a pack of cigarettes.<sup>7</sup> Because nicotine in cigar smoke is absorbed through tissues lining the mouth, cigars can be addictive—even when the smoke is not inhaled.

In addition to cancer and gum disease, cigar smoking may increase the risk of heart disease, emphysema and chronic bronchitis.<sup>8</sup>

Containing the same toxic and carcinogenic compounds as cigarettes, cigars can be very dangerous to your oral and overall health. When you quit smoking, your mouth and body will start to heal and you can lower your risk of cancer, heart disease and more.<sup>9</sup> Talk to your doctor if you need help stopping.

# SMILE STATS



Clint Eastwood detested the ever-present cigars he puffed in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* and other westerns.<sup>10</sup>



New Jersey passed the country's first law that forbade tobacco sales to people younger than 16 in 1883.<sup>11</sup>



Because Bluetooth unifies communication standards, it's named after a king who united tribes and stained his teeth with blueberries.<sup>12</sup>

# The Best Ways to Discourage Kids from Using Tobacco



Hundreds of cases of lung disease and at least nine deaths have recently been linked by health officials to vaping.<sup>13</sup> This is especially concerning considering the explosive growth in e-cigarette usage by high schoolers (up 78% in 2018).<sup>14</sup>

There are also long-term concerns. More than 5.6 million of today's high schoolers will die early from a smoking-related illness if overall tobacco usage among youth continues at its current rate.<sup>15</sup> Most people who use tobacco start early, and the younger they start, the more likely they are to become addicted to nicotine and have difficulty quitting.<sup>16</sup>

With about 90% of cigarette smokers trying their first cigarette by 18, it's important to talk with kids about the dangers of tobacco early and often.<sup>17</sup> Start chatting with them as soon as age 5 and keep an open and ongoing conversation through their high school years. If you need help getting started, try these talking points:

- 1. Tobacco damages your overall health.**

Tobacco is not safe in any form—cigarettes, electronic, cigars, pipes or smokeless (chewing tobacco and snuff). Tobacco usage can cause cancer and smoking may lead to heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).<sup>18</sup> On average, smokers die 14 years sooner than non-smokers.<sup>19</sup> Make sure the consequences of tobacco use resonate with your child by using examples of relatives, friends or celebrities who've battled tobacco-related illnesses.

- 2. It's addictive.**

Teens may think they won't become addicted or that it will be easy to stop. But it takes as few as five packs of cigarettes to become addicted, and it's extremely difficult to quit.<sup>20</sup> Chewing tobacco, cigars and e-cigarettes that contain nicotine are also addictive.

- 3. It's a waste of money.**

Calculate the cost of smoking, vaping and chewing tobacco with your child. Talk about ways that money could be spent, like purchasing electronics, clothes and other items instead.

- 4. It hurts oral health, too.**

One of the most obvious ways tobacco is unappealing is in its effect on oral health. Tobacco usage damages teeth and gums and can cause tooth loss. Smoking can lead to yellow teeth and cause the dreaded "ashtray breath" (plus stinky hair and clothes). Tobacco usage also increases the risk of oral cancer and many other oral diseases and complications.

## Here's how to help them say, "No!"

Kids often try tobacco to fit in with other kids. While they may see tobacco used in media or among peers, remind them that most teens and adults don't use tobacco.

Talk about ways to refuse tobacco. Work with your child on language to employ if they are pressured to try tobacco. It's helpful to role-play so they know how to act before a situation arises.

The more you keep the lines of communication open, the more likely your child will feel comfortable asking you questions and following your guidance to avoid tobacco.

# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: DARK CHOCOLATE-COVERED FROZEN BANANAS

## Ingredients:



4 to 5 ripe bananas,  
peeled and halved



1 cup dark  
chocolate chips



3 tablespoons coconut oil

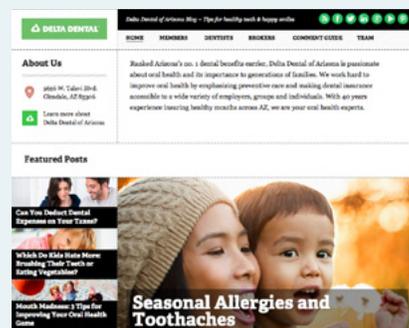
## Directions:

1. Insert wooden stick into cut side of each banana half. Place on baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Freeze 2 to 3 hours or overnight.
2. In a small saucepan, melt dark chocolate chips and coconut oil over low heat until smooth.
3. Dip frozen banana halves in chocolate. Place dipped bananas back on parchment paper. Return bananas to freezer for 30 to 60 minutes.
4. Enjoy! Store leftovers in an airtight zip-top bag in freezer.

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