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SMOKING AND ORAL CANCER



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"Don't start smoking. If you do smoke now, stop."

That is the advice many dentists and physicians are giving their patients. These doctors have studied the evidence available and believe that smoking is a health hazard.

The report of the surgeon general of the United States, based on statistical studies, states:

"1. The causal relationship of the smoking of pipes to the development of cancer of the lip appears to be established.

"2. Although there are suggestions of relationships between cancer of other specific sites of the oral cavity and the several forms of tobacco use, their causal implications cannot at present be stated."

However, the report further indicates that seven studies show that cigarette smokers have 4.1 times the oral cancer mortality of non-smokers.

In a later study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, an investigator analyzed the health histories of 102

persons known to have arrested cancer of the mouth and throat. Among the 65 patients who continued to smoke, 21 developed cancer a second time in the mouth, pharynx or larynx. Only two among the 37 who stopped smoking developed new throat cancers.

The conclusions of the study are:

"In those smokers who do get mouth-throat cancer, tobacco appears to play a necessary, causative role in 90 per cent of them. . . .

"Smokers who stop after their first mouth-throat cancer run only a small risk of getting another. . . .

"It would now appear that tobacco in any form can cause cancer of the mouth and throat."

So don't be fooled into believing you can avoid cancer by switching from cigarettes to a pipe or even cigars.

About 20,000 cases of oral cancer occur

each year. Treatment may involve surgical removal, radiation, a combination of these or, in some instances, the use of chemotherapeutic agents. The diseased tissue and surrounding tissues which may be involved by the growth of cells must be removed or destroyed. When treatment results in a poor cosmetic effect, difficulty in speaking and eating and psychological disorders, additional serious problems are created for the patient.

What can you do about it? The best thing you can do is to stop smoking. If you don't smoke now, don't start. See your dentist regularly. Regular examination of the mouth will make early detection and treatment of oral cancer possible.

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