

One More Reason To Quit...

I've been told that smoking is the hardest habit to break. Even with the newer prescription drugs and nicotine replacement therapies, quitting tobacco is still an uphill battle. Most everyone knows the risks; cancer, stroke, gum disease, emphysema...the list goes on. If those don't scare one into quitting, then the following is just a footnote, but interesting, nonetheless.

Most of today's dentistry can be referred to as "adhesive" dentistry. In the old days, silver mercury fillings were held in place by mechanical retention. In other words, grooves, dimples, dovetails, and even metal pins were all placed into teeth to keep those metal fillings from falling out. This led to a lot of healthy tooth being modified to make things work. All this destruction of tooth structure leads to even more problems down the line when the mercury fillings corrode. The more healthy tooth we can save the better.

Fortunately, science has developed a solution to this problem. Today's tooth colored fillings are held in place by chemically bonding them to healthy tooth structure. The advantage being that healthy tooth structure does not have to be removed to make a filling stay in place. Therefore, tooth colored fillings are more conservative and less invasive. This same "adhesive" can be used to hold crowns onto teeth and is what makes dental veneers (porcelain tooth fronts) a successful treatment option. Subsequently, it is rare for today's fillings or crowns to fall out. On the rare occasion this does happen, more times than not, the actual tooth fails (breaks), not the adhesive bond. Science has made all of our lives a little better.

Now, back to smoking. New studies show that smoking decreases the bond strength between tooth colored fillings and natural tooth structure. In plain terms, smoking can make your fillings not stick in place. We learned this the hard way when one of our great patients got frustrated about a filling that kept popping out. After several tries, we finally figured that the smoke was causing our problem. Fortunately, this was an isolated instance and it is still rare, even for smokers, to have fillings that will not stay in place.

Just one more reason to quit smoking. Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.