

# Smoking is a major cause of gum disease: study

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Almost a third of the more than two million cases of gum disease among Australians are caused by smoking, according to research by University of Adelaide researchers in the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health (ARCPOH).

The study, led by Research Fellow Dr Loc Do, is the first of its kind in Australia showing the significant impact of smoking on oral health in the population.

"Gum disease is one of the most prevalent forms of oral disease," says Dr Do. "Along with dental caries, it's the main cause of tooth loss in the Australian population."

"There are over two million cases of gum disease in Australian adults, but our study found that up to 700,000 of these, or 32%, could be prevented by not smoking."

Dr Do's study uses data collected in the National Survey of Adult Oral Health, conducted by ARCPOH in collaboration with State/Territory dental organisations during 2004-2006.

The research found that young and middle-aged adults and adults with lower socioeconomic status were more likely to be current smokers.

"The hazardous effect of smoking on gums is higher among the younger population, indicating the desirability of preventing the uptake of smoking in this population," Dr Do said. "Dental professionals should urge potential smokers to avoid the habit and encourage current smokers to stop."

The effect of smoking on gums was due to reduced anti-inflammatory agents in the blood vessels of the gums, restriction in the blood supply to the gum tissue, and more virulent bacteria, Dr Do says.

This study used a national representative sample of adults (15+years) and is published in a paper 'Smoking-attributable periodontal disease in the Australian adult population' in the *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*.

Source: University of Adelaide

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