

Oral Health Matters

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH

Help Your Patients Quit Tobacco

You are a professional motivator

As an oral health professional, much of your day is spent encouraging your patients to adopt better oral health practices. The same motivational principles you use to encourage a patient to brush and floss properly can be employed as part of a multifactor effort to help them quit smoking.

Educate yourself, then your patients

Because of the addictive nature of nicotine, helping your patients quit smoking is especially challenging and to be successful in helping your patient quit requires understanding the nature of addiction-based behaviors.

One of the best things you can do before you educate your patients on smoking cessation is to educate yourself about smoking cessation programs. A good place to start is by taking one of the widely available Continuing Dental Education courses on smoking cessation or by visiting the *ADA web portal for smoking cessation*.¹

The 5 A's and the 5 R's of a Smoking Cessation Program

Helping your patients quit smoking will likely involve what is widely known as the 5 A's and the 5 R's. Developed by the U.S. Public Health Service², the 5 A's are the key components of a healthcare provider's intervention strategy while the 5 R's are key elements of an intervention and motivation strategy.

The 5 A's – Intervention

Ask – Have the patient describe how they use tobacco.

Advise – Clearly reinforce that the patient should quit.

Assess – Determine if the patient is willing to quit.

Assist – Discuss various smoking cessation interventions.

Arrange – Make plans to follow up with the patient.

The 5 R's – Motivation

Relevance – Ask why quitting is relevant to the patient.

Risks – Ask the patient to identify short-term and long-term risks of smoking.

Rewards – Ask the patient to list the rewards of quitting.

Roadblocks – Have the patient identify barriers to quitting.

Repetition – Repeat the motivational process at every patient visit.

¹ <http://www.ada.org/en/member-center/oral-health-topics/smoking-and-tobacco-cessation>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK63948>

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