TOOTH BE TOLD, TOBACCO FREE SPACES ARE A REASON TO SMILE

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

AT A GLANCE

Healthcare providers play a critical role in helping people quit using tobacco. Dental professionals are well-positioned to serve as sources of cessation support for their patients who smoke, as the mouth is often the first place to notice adverse health effects from tobacco products. In September, a District Tobacco Prevention Partner (DTPP) from Portland Public Health began continued efforts to engage with dental offices and build partnerships with our healthcare leaders in the community who play a key role in initiating healthy conversations about the use of tobacco products.

We know that tobacco use raises your risk for periodontal disease. In 2011–2016, 43% of adults over 65 who currently smoke cigarettes had lost all their teeth, compared to just 12% of those who never smoked cigarettes. Untreated tooth decay can cause pain, infections, and problems eating, speaking, and learning. Among adults aged 20–64 years, over 40% who currently smoke cigarettes had untreated tooth decay. Among adults aged 65 and over, 34% who were currently smoking cigarettes had untreated tooth decay. This is more than twice the number who have never smoked.

The leadership team at Breakwater Dental is familiar with these unpleasant health statistics about the risks that tobacco poses to the oral (and overall) health of their patients.

The leadership team at Breakwater Dental knows that quitting is the only way to decrease your risk of tobaccorelated health problems. In September 2021, Breakwater Dental teamed up with Portland Public Health to implement a tobacco free policy that protects employees, patients, and visitors from the effects of second and thirdhand smoke. In addition to reducing exposure to second and thirdhand smoke, their comprehensive tobacco policy also sends a clear message that tobacco has no place in dental health.



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By adopting a more comprehensive tobacco policy, Breakwater Dental is setting the tone to de-normalize the use of tobacco products in their community. Portland Public Health will continue to support their success by providing resources on the Maine QuitLink to their public waiting areas for people who are interested in pursuing a tobacco free life, but do not know where to begin.

Today, Breakwater Dental is continuing to be a champion for tobacco prevention by applying for our Gold Star Standard of Excellence (GSSE) recognition award.

"Tobacco smoke destroys cells at the microscopic level and damages our DNA. This leads to greater instances of severe complications that, as a dentist, I'm unfortunately very familiar with — infections, gum disease, tooth loss, and oral cancer."

Dr. Florence Edwards, Practicing Dentist at Breakwater Dental



For More information contact us at City of Portland Public Health Division kfaucher@portlandmaine.gov

