

# News of Health

## Orthodontists Tell Teens: Stop Smoking!

(NAPSA)—Many pre-teens and teenagers are hearing anti-tobacco-use messages from sources that might be surprising: their orthodontists. The American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) supports the American Cancer Society's annual Great American SmokeOut. During the Great American Smokeout on November 15 this year, orthodontic patients who smoke or chew tobacco were encouraged to forgo the habit that day.

In addition, the AAO, which has 8,500 members in the United States and Canada, formed a partnership earlier this year with the American Lung Association. As a result of the partnership, AAO members are educating patients to avoid tobacco use.

One of the first AAO members to commit to the anti-tobacco-use effort was Dr. Ronald Risinger, who has an orthodontic practice in Beaumont, Texas. Dr. Risinger says that teen smokers—who may not admit that they smoke as readily as do adult patients—are easily identifiable.

"I pick up the smell on their breath or from their clothes right away," he says. "And often there is yellowing or staining of the teeth as well."

Before entering private practice in orthodontics, Dr. Risinger worked on a military base as a dentist. He says that because military dental practices strongly emphasize anti-smoking education, he became very comfortable addressing the issue with patients.

"This year I contacted the local chapter of the American Lung Association to get some anti-tobacco use brochures and posters for my office," he says. "And we keep plenty of information on local smoking cessation resources available for any of our patients



**Orthodontists encourage patients to avoid tobacco use, and want to help patients quit if they have begun smoking or chewing tobacco.**

who need help quitting."

Orthodontic patients often visit their orthodontists at least once a month for orthodontic appliance adjustments. With such frequent visits, orthodontists are able to provide regular follow-up and reinforcement of the anti-tobacco message. This is especially important for teenagers, who may not often see any other health professionals.

Because about 80 percent of orthodontic patients are under 18, orthodontists are highly experienced in communicating with young people and knowledgeable of adolescent psychology. In many cases, orthodontists believe they can speak persuasively against tobacco use—and in favor of healthy lifestyles—in language that resonates with teenagers.

"Counseling patients against tobacco use fits in perfectly with our work as healthcare professionals," says Dr. Risinger. "We are interested not only in patients' long-term dental health, but also in each patient's overall health."

To learn more, visit the American Association of Orthodontists' Web site, [www.braces.org](http://www.braces.org).