

What is Smokeless Tobacco?



A can of smokeless tobacco with an FDA warning label:
"This product can cause mouth cancer."

Smokeless tobacco products contain tobacco or tobacco blends that are chewed, sucked on, or sniffed:

Chewing Tobacco - Sweetened, loose tobacco leaves. Also called "chew," "plugs," or "wads."

Snuff - Finely ground or shredded tobacco leaves, can be moist or dry.

Snus (pronounced "snoos") - Finely ground moist form of snuff that originated from Sweden and Norway.

Dissolvable Tobacco - Pieces of compressed powdered tobacco that dissolve in the mouth like hard candies. They come in lozenges, orbs, and pellets. They also come in strips and sticks.

MYTH: Smokeless tobacco is a "healthy" alternative to smoking.

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance that continues to be absorbed into the bloodstream even after tobacco is removed from the mouth and it stays in the bloodstream longer than when smoked.

One tin of snuff may have approximately the same amount of nicotine as 60 cigarettes. An average-sized dip or chew in your mouth for 30 minutes gives you as much nicotine as smoking approximately four cigarettes.

28 cancer-causing substances have been found in smokeless tobacco. Some are listed below:

Cadmium: Found in car batteries

Lead: A poison

N-Nitrosamines: Cancer-causing chemical

Acetaldehyde: Irritant

Benzopyrene: Cancer-causing chemical

Formaldehyde: Used in embalming fluid

Nicotine: An addictive chemical

Polonium 210: Nuclear waste

Hydrazine: Toxic chemical

Fiberglass and Sand: Abrasives

If you're trying to quit smoking, don't switch to smokeless tobacco. It can be just as addictive and even harder to quit.

Health Risks Specific to Smokeless Tobacco

Leukoplakia - White patches found inside the mouth where users normally place their tobacco. They are precancerous and may be mistaken for sores. **You should see your doctor immediately if you find one.**

Gum disease - Tobacco irritates and destroys gum tissue, leading to receding gums, gum disease, tooth decay, and bone loss. Once gum recedes from teeth, it does not grow back. Teeth become loose and fall out.

Dental disease - Caused by the sugar in smokeless tobacco, which can eat away at enamel and contribute to cavities and chronic sores. The tobacco can also stain teeth and cause persistent bad breath and black hairy tongue.

Cancer - Risks for certain types of cancer increase with smokeless tobacco: cancers of the mouth, throat, cheeks, gums, lips, tongue, and pancreas. They may be life threatening and surgery is often permanently disfiguring.

Heart disease - High amounts of nicotine increases your heart rate and blood pressure, and can also cause irregular heartbeats. This increases the risk of dying of heart disease and stroke.

Stomach problems - Swallowing tobacco juice may irritate the stomach and contribute to ulcers. It may also increase the risk for stomach cancer.

Loss of taste and smell - This can lead to loss of appetite and possibly malnutrition.

Physical changes - Smokeless tobacco users can experience fatigue, muscle weakness, dizziness, and decreased physical/athletic performance, including slower, more irregular movements. Nicotine may be detrimental to performance of complex tasks.

Remember: There is NO safe form of tobacco!