

# Facts You Should Know About Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco

**Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco is tobacco that is placed inside the mouth in one of three forms:**

**Snuff** – ground-up moist tobacco usually placed between the bottom lip and gum. This is also referred to as "dipping".

**Chew** – shredded tobacco leaves placed between the cheek and gum. This is also referred to as "a wad".

**Plug** – shredded tobacco leaves which are pressed into a hard block and placed between the cheek and gum.



Graphic courtesy of the American Academy of Otolaryngology

## Ingredients of Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco:

### **Nicotine:**

Nicotine is a poisonous and highly addictive drug found in all tobacco products: smokeless (spit) tobacco, cigarettes, cigars and pipe tobacco.

### **Carcinogens:**

Many cancer-producing chemicals have been identified in smokeless (spit) tobacco. Nitrosamines are the main carcinogens.

### **Sweeteners:**

Because tobacco has an unpleasant taste, some brands of smokeless tobacco are heavily sweetened with sugars, which promote tooth decay. Flavourings such as mint, licorice or cherry may be added to improve the taste.

### **Abrasives:**

Tobacco leaves contain gritty materials which wear down the surfaces of teeth. These materials also scratch the soft tissues in the mouth, allowing the nicotine and other chemicals to get directly into the blood system.

### **Salt:**

Flavouring salts found in smokeless (spit) tobacco contribute to abnormal blood pressure and kidney disease.

### **Other Chemicals:**

Hundreds of other chemicals can be found in tobacco which contribute to many health problems.

## Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco is not safer than smoking.

In fact, smokeless (spit) tobacco is just as dangerous to your health as cigarette smoking. People who dip or chew increase their risk of:

**Mouth Cancer** – cancer of the cheeks, gums, lips and tongue. Smokeless (spit) tobacco users have a 50% higher chance of getting mouth cancer than non-users.

**Throat Cancer** – cancer of the voice box and cancer of the esophagus.

**Heart disease** – heart attacks, strokes and high blood pressure.

**Dental diseases** – stained teeth, tooth decay, receding gums, gum disease, bad breath and black hairy tongue.

**Stomach problems** – ulcers, stomach upset, increased bowel activity and stomach cancer.

**Loss of taste and smell** – causes loss of appetite which results in poor nutrition and poor health.

**Physical changes** – fatigue, muscle weakness, dizziness and decreased physical performance.

People who dip or chew spread their germs when they spit. This increases the risk of passing an infection to others.



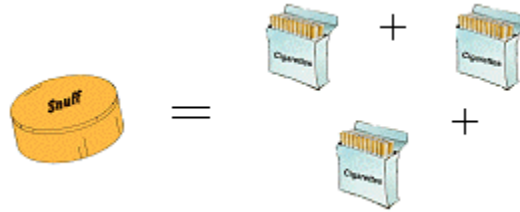
Tobacco users have a greater risk of developing gum disease.

## Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco is as addictive as smoking cigarettes.

Addiction means getting hooked to a powerful drug called nicotine. Nicotine is just as addictive as cocaine or heroin.

Each tin of snuff contains a lethal dose of nicotine.

One tin of snuff has the same amount of nicotine as 60 cigarettes.



Holding an average-sized dip or chew in your mouth for 30 minutes gives you as much nicotine as smoking four cigarettes.

Because smokeless (spit) tobacco is absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream through the lining of the mouth, it may be even more addictive than smoking cigarettes.

## At least 70% of all major league baseball players don't chew or dip.

Surveys show that two out of three players who use smokeless (spit) tobacco would like to quit! Over half of the players who chew or dip report gum problems and dental disease.

Recently, both professional baseball (minor leagues) and junior hockey (Western Hockey League) have banned the use of smokeless (spit) tobacco by players, coaches and officials.

### Why do some athletes use smokeless (spit) tobacco?

Many try dipping out of curiosity or encouragement from a friend or teammate. In the past, tobacco companies provided free smokeless tobacco (as free advertising) to players and their teams.

It doesn't take long to become hooked. Many find once they start it's hard to stop.

## Tobacco harms all users, some more severely than others.

Just because someone doesn't have any noticeable side effects from using smokeless (spit) tobacco, it doesn't mean he won't in the future. Often by the time the signs are noticeable, it's too late. Mouth cancer is very hard to cure and can spread rapidly throughout the body.

- Former Chicago Cubs first-baseman Steve Fox chewed tobacco for six years. He developed white patches in his mouth and a sore on his tongue that wouldn't heal. His doctors told him he had mouth cancer. Half of his tongue had to be removed.
- Sean Marsee, an Oklahoma track star, started using snuff when he was 12 years old. He died of mouth cancer at the age of 19.

Pre-cancerous lesion in area where tobacco is held.  
Photo courtesy of Dr. Arden G. Christen DDS



## Quit Tips for Smokeless (Spit) Tobacco users.

**Many smokeless (spit) tobacco users say it is even harder to quit than cigarettes.**

Trying to quit can be difficult, but not impossible. Here are some tips to **spit it out and keep it out**.

- Make a list of all the reasons you want to quit. Keep it with you and look at it often.
- Pick a quit date and announce your plan to quit. Ask for help from friends and family members who will offer encouragement.
- Make it difficult to use tobacco; throw out all your chewing tobacco and snuff.
- When the urge to use tobacco hits, take a deep breath. Hold it for ten seconds, then release slowly.
- Get more exercise. Exercise will reduce tension and help with weight control.
- Stock up on low-calorie "nibbles" such as sugarless gum and candy, carrots, fresh fruit, popcorn and sunflower seeds (good for spitting, too).
- Avoid situations or places where you usually use tobacco, such as the "Smoking Area" at school, riding with friends who smoke or chew, or watching TV, etc.
- Get rid of nicotine in your body. Drink lots of water, fruit juices and caffeine-free soft drinks.
- Keep busy. Wash the car, the dog, the dishes (parents will love it!). Write a letter, play an instrument, take a walk, call a friend.
- Get rid of "tobacco mouth" by brushing your teeth and tongue several times throughout the day.
- Estimate how much money you will save by not using tobacco.
- Reward yourself frequently. Quitting is hard and you deserve credit for your efforts. Plan to reward yourself with each success; buy a new tape or CD, a sweater or shirt, a new pair of jeans.

## What do you do if your friends or classmates try to push you into chewing or dipping?

Peer pressure can be hard to handle sometimes, but the consequences of smokeless tobacco are way worse.

**Here are a few tips that can help you get out of a tough situation, and still keep your friends.**

- Leave the area.
- Appear to be busy, deep in thought or distracted.
- Make an excuse, such as homework, chores or helping your parents.
- Change the subject.
- Make a joke out of it. "Yes, I'd really like to have my lips turn black".
- Act shocked. "I can't believe you're going to do that".
- Use flattery. "You're too smart to do that".
- Suggest a better idea and put it into action.
- Return the challenge. "Are you too scared to do it by yourself?"
- Explain the dangers of chewing, thereby making the suggestion seem completely ridiculous.
- Just say **NO** and say it in a steady, confident voice.



*Adapted from: Saskatchewan Health*