

# Smokeless Tobacco

## What is smokeless tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco includes:

- Chewing tobacco, which is leaf tobacco that is put inside the cheek
- Snuff, which is finely ground and put between the cheeks and gums, or sniffed through the nose

Smokeless tobacco is sometimes called spit or spitting tobacco because you have to spit out the tobacco juices and saliva that builds up in your mouth.

Smokeless tobacco users are often teens and young adults. If you start using smokeless tobacco at a young age, you are more likely to start smoking cigarettes.

## What are the risks?

Smokeless tobacco contains nicotine that can lead to addiction. More nicotine is taken up by the body from smokeless tobacco than from cigarettes, and it stays in the body longer. You need more tobacco and stronger tobacco over time to get the same effects. Smokeless tobacco contains chemicals that cause cancer. Your risk of getting cancer of the mouth, cheeks, or gums is much higher than someone who does not use tobacco. Swallowing the juice can increase the risk for cancer of the voice box, colon, and bladder.

Smokeless tobacco can irritate your gums, which can cause gum disease. It increases your risk for cavities, stains your teeth, and can wear down your teeth. No amount of flossing or brushing can keep these changes from happening.

Smokeless tobacco causes your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to go up. This puts a strain on your heart and can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

## What are signs of addiction?

Signs that you are addicted to smokeless tobacco include:

- Using smokeless tobacco more often and not being able to go more than a few hours without it
- Switching to stronger tobacco, with more nicotine
- Swallowing the juice on a regular basis
- Sleeping with smokeless tobacco in your mouth
- Needing smokeless tobacco first thing in the morning
- Having very strong cravings when trying to stop using smokeless tobacco

## How can I take care of myself?

There are things you can do you help yourself quit using smokeless tobacco:

- **Make a plan:**

- Set a date that you plan to quit and tell your family and friends. Some people gradually use less tobacco in the days leading up to their quit date. Others use the same amount of tobacco right up to their quit date.
- It may also help to use non-tobacco mint leaf snuff, sugarless gum, hard candy, beef jerky, or sunflower seeds in place of the tobacco.
- Throw out all your tobacco products and anything that you use with your tobacco such as spit cups.
- Think about all the reasons you do not want to use tobacco. For example, you may hate the smell and the cost. You can write these reasons down and review them whenever you feel tempted to use tobacco.
- Make a list of the situations, places, or emotions that make you more likely to use tobacco. These things are called triggers. Being aware of these triggers can help you avoid them or be ready for them. For example, if you always use tobacco after an argument with your partner, make a plan to take a walk the next time you have an argument.
- **Get support.** Talk with family and friends. Join a support group or class.
- **Learn to manage stress.** Ask for help at home and work when the load is too great to handle. Find ways to relax, for example take up a hobby, listen to music, watch movies, or take walks. Try deep breathing exercises when you feel stressed.
- **Take care of your physical health.** Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Eat a healthy diet. Limit caffeine. Don't use alcohol or drugs. Exercise according to your healthcare provider's instructions.
- **Check your medicines.** To help prevent problems, tell your healthcare provider and pharmacist about all the medicines, natural remedies, vitamins, and other supplements that you take.
- **Contact your healthcare provider for a prescription** medicine that can help you quit. Ask about using nicotine gum or patches.
- **Keep trying.** Many people try more than once to quit smoking before they finally succeed. So, never say, "I can't." You CAN learn to live without tobacco in your daily life.

See a healthcare provider or dentist for information and help in quitting smokeless tobacco. You may also want to contact:

- The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial  
866-232-4528  
<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov>

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