

NOT AN ALTERNATIVE

Think Smokeless Tobacco is Safe? Think Again.

Smokeless tobacco will give you bad breath, stained teeth and a lifetime of addiction and illness. People who use smokeless tobacco products – like dip, chew, spit, snuff and snus – are putting themselves at risk for many of the same health issues as people who smoke cigarettes.

Many users think smokeless tobacco products are “safe” alternatives to cigarettes. That’s dead wrong: smokeless tobacco products contain just as many cancer-causing chemicals as cigarettes do; including formaldehyde, arsenic, nickel and nitrosamines (TSNAs).

PICK YOUR POISON: THE TYPES OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO

Unlike cigarettes and cigars, smokeless tobacco products don’t need to be burned and inhaled. Instead, smokeless tobacco products are directly inserted into the mouth, sniffed or inhaled. Smokeless tobacco products contain a high level of nicotine – that’s the chemical that gets tobacco users hooked.

There are three types of smokeless tobacco products: Chewing/Spit tobacco is the most common form of smokeless tobacco. It’s usually sold in pouches or tins and sometimes it’s flavored. It is inserted in the lip and the juices are spit out. Snuff is dried, ground tobacco that is sniffed or inhaled. Snus (pronounced “snooze”) come in a pouch and it does not require the user to spit out the juices.

HOOKED: NICOTINE, DOPAMINE AND YOUR BRAIN

When you use a tobacco product, nicotine enters your bloodstream and immediately attaches onto your brain’s neurotransmitters. These transmitters are like information highways, passing data from your brain to other parts of your body. Nicotine causes your brain to release dopamine, a chemical that controls your feelings of joy and excitement.

Tobacco users become addicted to this feeling. They keep using tobacco so their brain keeps producing dopamine. Eventually they have to use more and more tobacco to feel good. Once you “need” nicotine to feel normal, you’re addicted.



HELLO, HALITOSIS

Smokeless Tobacco’s Short-term Effects

Both snuff and chewing tobacco products contain more than twice the nicotine as cigarettes. Because chew and dip contain such high levels of nicotine, they’re twice as addictive as cigarettes. Many first-time users get hooked right away. You’ve probably heard stories about how hard it is to quit smoking, right? Smokeless tobacco is just as hard to quit – maybe even harder.

Bottom line, smokeless tobacco is seriously habit-forming, and it’s a nasty habit. Smokeless tobacco products stain your teeth, turning them yellow and brown. That’s not all. When you use dip, snuff, or snus your mouth smells as bad as it looks. Most smokeless tobacco users suffer from severe halitosis (that’s a scientific way to say “bad breath”).

Still think smokeless tobacco is a good alternative to cigarettes? You might change your mind when you look in the mirror.

SPITTING ON YOUR LIFE

Smokeless Tobacco’s Long-term Effects

Think bad breath and brown teeth are scary? It gets worse. The long-term effects of smokeless tobacco include:

- Gum disease and tooth loss
- Increased risk for several types of cancer; including oral cancer, throat cancer and pancreatic cancer
- Increased risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of stroke

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that about 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with throat and mouth cancer every year. About 8,000 of those people don’t survive.

Smokeless tobacco can kill you. It’s not safe. Don’t believe anyone who tells you it is.



AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

Brett’s Story

18-year-old Brett was a star athlete at his high school in Kansas. He helped his baseball team win back-to-back championship titles for three years in a row. He was set to graduate soon and the chance for a full scholarship looked bright. All he had to do to get that scholarship was to shine his senior year. No problem.



Unfortunately, Brett made a huge mistake over the summer. He had started smoking and he was having a hard time keeping up with the rest of his team when they started training. He knew he had to quit, but he felt so moody and bad when he didn’t have a cigarette. So his friend Alan introduced him to chewing tobacco. Chew would keep him feeling good, Alan explained, but it wouldn’t hurt his lungs.

A few months later, Brett was back in top form. The season had started and he was performing well. The problem, though, was that he felt a pain in the side of his mouth – the same area he placed his chewing tobacco. He let it slide for a while, thinking it was a toothache or a sore, but soon Brett could feel a growth in his cheek. He was afraid to say anything, so he ignored it.

It wasn’t until the cancerous tumor started protruding through his skin that he began to panic.

Brett’s doctors worked with him for eight long weeks, exposing him to high doses of radiation throughout. They removed parts of his cheek and gums to contain the cancer. Luckily the doctors were able to save Brett’s life, but his body had become weak and frail. He was pale and dejected and his family was completely broke from paying the high hospital bills not covered by their insurance.

Brett’s chances of becoming a baseball star had ended just as they were beginning.