

# QUIT the spit



## Information About Chewing Tobacco

### 1. What is chewing tobacco?

Chewing tobacco is one type of smokeless tobacco. It is available in loose leaf, plug (plug-firm and plug-moist), or twist forms. The user puts a wad of tobacco inside the cheek. The other common form of smokeless tobacco is called snuff. It is finely ground or shredded tobacco. It is packaged as dry, moist, or in sachets (tea bag-like pouches). Typically, the user places a pinch or dip between the cheek and gum.

Smokeless tobacco products are sometimes called “spit” or “spitting” tobacco because people need to spit out the tobacco juices and saliva that build up in their mouth. Other common names include; chew, dip, and spit.

### 2. What harmful chemicals are found in chewing tobacco?

All tobacco, products contain nicotine, which is addictive. The amount of nicotine absorbed from chewing tobacco is 3 to 4 times the amount delivered by a cigarette. Nicotine is absorbed more slowly from chewing tobacco than from cigarettes, but more nicotine per dose is absorbed from chewing tobacco than from cigarettes.

- Chewing tobacco and snuff contain approximately 28 cancer-causing agents. The most harmful carcinogens in smokeless tobacco are the tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs).
- Other cancer-causing substances in chewing tobacco include N-nitrosamino acids, volatile N-nitrosamines, benzo(a)pyrene, volatile aldehydes, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, crotonaldehyde, hydrazine, arsenic, nickel, cadmium, benzopyrene, and polonium-210.

### 3. What cancers are related to chewing tobacco use?

- Using chewing tobacco increase a person’s risk for cancer of the oral cavity and pharynx. Oral cancer can include cancer of the lip, tongue, cheeks, gums, and the floor and roof of the mouth.
- People who use oral snuff for a long time have a much greater risk for cancer of the cheek and gum than people who do not use smokeless tobacco products.

**ADDICTIVE • CANCER CAUSING • NOT A SAFE ALTERNATIVE TO SMOKING**

## Information About Chewing Tobacco (cont'd)



### 4. What are some of the other ways chewing tobacco can harm users' health?

Some of the other harmful effects of using chewing tobacco include addiction to nicotine, oral leukoplakia (white mouth lesions that can become cancerous), periodontal (gum) disease, gingival (gum) recession, bad breath and cavities.

### 5. Is chewing tobacco a good substitute for cigarettes?

NO - In 1986, the Surgeon General of the United States concluded that the use of smokeless tobacco "is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. It can cause cancer and a number of non-cancerous conditions and can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence." The National Cancer Institute of the United States has officially recommended that the public avoid and discontinue the use of all tobacco products, including chewing tobacco products. Even Philip Morris one of the largest producers of chewing tobacco has stated that chewing tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking.

### 6. Should you use chewing tobacco to quit cigarettes?

No - Because all types of tobacco use cause disease and addiction, switching to chewing tobacco is not a recommended strategy for people who want to quit smoking. Several non-tobacco methods have been shown to be effective for quitting cigarettes including nicotine replacement therapies such as the patch, nicotine gums, and lozenges, as well as drug therapies like Zyban (bupropion SR). Non-drug therapies such as individual and group counseling, and telephone quitlines have been shown to be very effective.

### 7. Who uses chewing tobacco?

In the past chewing tobacco was used mostly by young men living in rural areas. Today we are seeing increased use by young girls and people living in more urban settings. It is often used by teens participating in team sports. People in many other countries and regions, including India, parts of Africa, and some Central Asian countries, have a long history of chewing substances such as betel and areca nut. These products are used as antiseptics, breath fresheners and stimulants. These products are also known to cause oral cancers.

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## Information About Chewing Tobacco (cont'd)



### 8. What Laws Apply to Chewing Tobacco?

In Ontario, chewing tobacco is treated the same as cigarettes. It is illegal to sell or supply chewing tobacco to people under the age of 19 years. It is also illegal to display this tobacco product anywhere it can be viewed or handled prior to purchasing it.

### 9. Where can people find help to quit using chewing tobacco?

Several organizations provide information about the health risks of chewing tobacco and how to quit:

The Durham Region Health Department website has excellent information about tobacco and quitting smoking – [www.region.durham.on.ca/health](http://www.region.durham.on.ca/health)

The Canadian Cancer Society – [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

NSTEP. [www.nstep.org](http://www.nstep.org) - This is an American organization. The mission of the National Spit Tobacco Education Program (NSTEP) is to prevent people, especially young people, from starting to use tobacco, and to help users to quit. NSTEP offers information and materials on spit tobacco use, prevention, and cessation.

### 10. What other resources are available?

Your dentist or doctor can be a good source of information about the health risks of chewing tobacco and about quitting. Friends, family members, teachers, and coaches can also help you quit chewing tobacco use by giving support and encouragement.