

About Smokeless Tobacco

Smokeless tobacco is a mixture of tobacco, nicotine, sweeteners, abrasives, salts and chemicals. It comes in two basic forms: chew and snuff. Chew is a leafy tobacco sold in pouches. Plug tobacco is a form of chew, sold in brick form. Snuff is finely ground tobacco in powder form, sold in small tins. Moisture releases the nicotine, which enters the bloodstream through the lining of the mouth and nose. Smokeless tobacco is addictive and harmful.

Spit Tobacco Facts

- 8 - 10 dips or chews of smokeless tobacco contain the same amount of nicotine as 30 - 40 cigarettes (nicotine is a stimulant that causes increased heart rate and blood pressure)
- smokeless tobacco is often flavoured with licorice, cherry or mint, and sweetened with molasses or sugar - flavours that appeal to young people
- a 2009 survey reports that 8% of Canadian youth 15 to 19 have tried smokeless tobacco

In addition to the addictive drug nicotine, smokeless tobacco contains over 3,000 chemicals, including 28 known cancer-causing chemicals (carcinogens). The most harmful carcinogens in smokeless tobacco are the tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs). Other cancer-causing substances are formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, arsenic, nickel, cadmium and benzopyrene

Cancer Facts

- smokeless tobacco causes oral cancer, about half of all oral cancer victims die within 5 years
- long-term moist snuff users increase their risk of cancer of the cheek and gum by up to 50 times
- smokeless tobacco increases the risk of cancers of the throat, voice box and esophagus

Other Health Risks

Smokeless tobacco also contains abrasives, used by the tobacco manufacturers to make tiny cuts in the gums and lining of the mouth so that the nicotine can be absorbed more quickly and enter into the bloodstream. These abrasives cause dental issues such as stained teeth, tooth decay, tooth loss, receding gums, gum disease, bad breath and black hairy tongue. Stomach problems such as ulcers, stomach upset, increased bowel activity and stomach cancer are also common in smokeless tobacco use.

Adapted from: www.actnowbc.ca/everyone/about_spit_tobacco

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