



## Get the Facts: Smokeless Tobacco

The use of smokeless tobacco continues to rise. Many view smokeless tobacco as less harmful than cigarettes; however, smokeless tobacco is just as addictive and harmful to one's health.

### What is smokeless tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco goes by several names: spit tobacco, chewing tobacco, and snuff. However, there are only two types of smokeless tobacco: oral snuff and chewing tobacco. The difference between the two comes from the way the tobacco is prepared by the manufacturer.

Snuff users will place a dip (also called a pinch) between the lower lip or cheek and the gums. Snuff may also be sniffed through the nose (nasal snuff). Chewing tobacco users place a chew (or wad) inside the cheek. Nicotine is slowly released from the tobacco and is absorbed by the body through the mucous membranes into the bloodstream. The level of nicotine in the body will remain at a certain point before a gradual decline.

### How addictive is smokeless tobacco?

Any substance with nicotine can be addictive. An individual who takes 8-10 dips or chews a day is exposed to the same amount of nicotine as someone who smokes 30-40 cigarettes a day.

### What are the health effects of using smokeless tobacco?

Some of the health risks of using smokeless tobacco include: oral cancers, cancer of the

esophagus, larynx and stomach, oral lesions, cardiovascular disease, receding gums, tooth loss, and leukoplakia (white patches inside the mouth). Smokeless tobacco stains teeth and causes bad breath. Swallowing tobacco spit increases exposure to the carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) found in tobacco.

### Why quit smokeless tobacco?

There are several good reasons **not** to use smokeless tobacco. Usually these reasons fall into one of four categories: health, social, cost, and addiction and control. Aside from the health risks already listed, smokeless tobacco use has been linked to the development of many other conditions.

Smokeless tobacco is considered a dirty habit. In social settings it can be difficult to hide since the user has to spit and it can be messy. Using smokeless tobacco can send the message to youth that it is acceptable.

Smokeless tobacco is a costly habit as well. A person who uses a tin or pouch of a popular smokeless tobacco brand each day spends around \$1,600 each year.

Nicotine is very addictive. Once a user reaches that point the addiction takes control. The daily routine of the user begins to revolve around using smokeless tobacco.

