

What is "Smokeless Tobacco"?

Smokeless tobacco, also referred to as spit tobacco, is tobacco that is not smoked or lighted.

Spit tobacco is a mixture of tobacco, nicotine, sweeteners, abrasives, salts and chemical.



Smokeless Tobacco comes in two forms: snuff and chew.

Snuff

- Most popular variety of smokeless tobacco and may be dry or moist.
- Dry snuff is usually sniffed through the nose and is more common in other countries.
- Snuff is a finely ground tobacco similar to a powder.
- The form most commonly used by youth today is moist snuff often called "dipping".
- Snuff is sold in small round tins or "pucks".
- A pinch of snuff is placed between the cheek and gum.
- A less messy variety of snuff is available in small individual packets that resemble small tea bags.

Chew

- Available in 3 forms – loose leaf, twist or plug.
- Loose leaf chew (shredded tobacco leaves) is the most common and is sold in pouches.
- Twist tobacco consists of dried leaves twisted into ropes.
- Plug tobacco is compressed into a small brick and a piece must be cut off.
- Loose leaf, twist or plug can be either chewed or sucked.
- Excess tobacco juice and extra saliva builds up in the mouth which must be spit out (into empty water or ice tea bottles for example).



Spit tobacco side-effects

Spit tobacco has over 3,000 chemicals, including 28 cancer causing agents.

Spit tobacco is not a safe substitute for cigarettes. Some side effects include but may not be limited to:



- Cancer of the mouth (lip, tongue, and cheek, floor and roof of the mouth) and throat.
- Leukoplakia (white, leathery sores) may develop where tobacco is held in the mouth, such as the cheeks, gums or tongue. These sores can turn into cancer of the mouth.
- Increased heart rate, high blood pressure and irregular heartbeats.
- Nicotine addiction. Spit tobacco contains more nicotine than cigarettes.
- Constricted blood vessels (caused by the nicotine) can slow your reaction time and cause dizziness.
- Tooth and gum disease including cavities, lost teeth, bad breath and painful sores.

Spit Tobacco Quick Facts ¹

- Spit tobacco contains more nicotine than cigarettes.
- Spit tobacco causes oral cancer.
- About half of all oral cancer victims die within five years.
- Long-term moist snuff users increase their risk of cancer of the cheek and gum by up to 50 times.
- Spit tobacco increases the risk of cancers of the throat, voice box and esophagus.
- Spit tobacco affects the cardiovascular system and may cause heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure.
- Many people start using spit tobacco at a very young age (approximately nine or 10 years old).
- The use of spit tobacco is a health and sanitation issue.



¹ Adapted from the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, 2006.

Harmful chemicals found in smokeless tobacco

Spit tobacco contains 28 carcinogens (cancer-causing agents).²



All tobacco, including spit tobacco, contains nicotine, which is addictive. The amount of nicotine absorbed from spit tobacco is 3 to 4 times the amount delivered by a cigarette. Nicotine is absorbed more slowly from spit tobacco than from cigarettes, but more nicotine per dose is absorbed from spit tobacco than from cigarettes. Also, the nicotine stays in the bloodstream for a longer time.

Cancers caused by or associated with spit tobacco use

Smokeless tobacco users increase their risk for cancer of the oral cavity. Oral cancer can include cancer of the lip, tongue, cheeks, gums, and the floor and roof of the mouth.

People who use 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.

The possible increased risk for other types of cancer from smokeless tobacco is being studied.

Some other ways smokeless tobacco can harm your health

Some of the other effects of smokeless tobacco use include:

- Addiction to nicotine.
- Oral leukoplakia (white mouth lesions that can become cancerous).
- Gum disease and gum recession (when the gum pulls away from the teeth).
- Increased risks for heart disease, diabetes and reproductive problems.



² Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer: National Cancer Institute, 05-2002