

# Smokeless Tobacco



## What Is Smokeless Tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco is tobacco that is not burned. It is also known as chewing tobacco, oral tobacco, spit or spitting tobacco, dip, chew, and snuff. Most people chew or suck (dip) the tobacco in their mouth and spit out the tobacco juices that build up, although “spitless” smokeless tobacco has also been developed. Nicotine in the tobacco is absorbed through the lining of the mouth.

People in many regions and countries, including North America, Northern Europe, India, other Asian countries, and parts of Africa, have a long history of using smokeless tobacco products.

There are two main types of smokeless tobacco:

- **Chewing tobacco**, which is available as loose leaves, plugs (bricks), or twists of rope. A piece of tobacco is placed between the cheek and lower lip, typically toward the back of the mouth. It is either chewed or held in place. Saliva is either spit or swallowed.
- **Snuff**, which is finely cut or powdered tobacco. It may be sold in different scents and flavors. It is packaged moist or dry; most American snuff is moist. It is available loose, in dissolvable lozenges or strips, or in small pouches similar to tea bags. The user places a pinch or pouch of moist snuff between the cheek and gums or behind the upper or lower lip. Another name for moist snuff is snus (pronounced “snoose”). Some people inhale dry snuff into the nose.

- Smokeless tobacco, also known as chewing tobacco, oral tobacco, dip, chew, and snuff, is tobacco that is chewed or sucked in the mouth and the juices are spit out.
- Smokeless tobacco contains harmful chemicals and can cause oral cancer, esophageal cancer, and pancreatic cancer. Smokeless tobacco can also cause heart disease, gum disease, and oral lesions.
- Smokeless tobacco should not be used to help a person quit smoking.
- CT Quitline (1.800.QUIT.NOW) offers free telephone counseling to help a person stop using smokeless tobacco.

## Are There Harmful Chemicals In Smokeless Tobacco?

Yes. There is no safe form of tobacco. At least 28 chemicals in smokeless tobacco have been found to cause cancer. The most harmful chemicals in smokeless tobacco are tobacco-specific nitrosamines, which are formed during the growing, curing, fermenting, and aging of tobacco. The level of tobacco-specific nitrosamines varies by product. Scientists have found that the nitrosamine level is directly related to the risk of cancer.

In addition to a variety of nitrosamines, other cancer-causing substances in smokeless tobacco include polonium-210 (a radioactive element found in tobacco fertilizer) and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (also known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons).

## Does Smokeless Tobacco Cause Cancer?

Yes. Smokeless tobacco causes oral cancer, esophageal cancer, and pancreatic cancer.

## Does Smokeless Tobacco Cause Other Diseases?

Yes. Using smokeless tobacco may also cause heart disease, gum disease, and oral lesions other than cancer, such as leukoplakia (precancerous white patches in the mouth).



Wheeler

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### **Can A User Get Addicted To Smokeless Tobacco?**

Yes. All tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, contain nicotine, which is addictive. Users of smokeless tobacco and users of cigarettes have comparable levels of nicotine in the blood. In users of smokeless tobacco, nicotine is absorbed through the mouth tissues directly into the blood, where it goes to the brain. Even after the tobacco is removed from the mouth, nicotine continues to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Also, the nicotine stays in the blood longer for users of smokeless tobacco than for smokers.

The level of nicotine in the blood depends on the amount of nicotine in the smokeless tobacco product, the tobacco cut size, the product's pH (a measure of its acidity or basicity), and other factors.

### **Is Using Smokeless Tobacco Less Hazardous Than Smoking Cigarettes?**

Because all tobacco products are harmful and cause cancer, the use of all of these products should be strongly discouraged. There is no safe level of tobacco use. People who use any type of tobacco product should be urged to quit.

As long ago as 1986, the advisory committee to the Surgeon General concluded that the use of smokeless tobacco "is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. It can cause cancer and a number of noncancerous oral conditions and can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence". Furthermore, a panel of experts convened by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2006 stated that the "range of risks, including nicotine addiction, from smokeless tobacco products may vary extensively because of differing levels of nicotine, carcinogens, and other toxins in different products".

### **Should Smokeless Tobacco Be Used To Help A Person Quit Smoking?**

No. There is no scientific evidence that using smokeless tobacco can help a person quit smoking. Because all tobacco products are harmful and cause cancer, the use of all tobacco products is strongly discouraged. There is no safe level of tobacco use. People who use any type of tobacco product should be urged to quit. For help with quitting, ask your doctor about individual or group counseling, telephone quitlines, or other cessation methods.

### **How Can A Person Get Help Quitting Smokeless Tobacco?**

The CT Quitline (1.800.QUIT.NOW) is a telephone help line offered free of charge that provides cessation counseling, quitting information, answers to questions, and the support people need while quitting. When a person calls, the call will be answered by a Quit Coach who is professionally trained to help people quit tobacco. The Quit Coach and the caller will create a personalized Quit Plan for the caller to be most successful. The caller will also receive Quit Guides that are full of helpful tips and information to keep them on track. The Quit Coach will also help the person decide if the nicotine patch, gum or other medication is best for them. The Quit Coach can also refer the caller to local cessation programs in their community.

## **Connecticut Resources**

### **CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

[www.ct.gov/DMHAS](http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS)

### **CT Department of Public Health CT Quitline**

[www.ct.gov/DPH](http://www.ct.gov/DPH)

1.800.QUIT.NOW (784.8669)

## **National Resources**

### **National Cancer Institute**

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

1.800.4.CANCER

### **American Lung Association**

[www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)

1.800.LUNGUSA (586.4872)

