
Smokeless Tobacco: Health Effects

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**One type
of smokeless tobacco**

Overview

Smokeless tobacco is associated with many health problems. Using smokeless tobacco:

- Can lead to nicotine addiction^{1,2}
- Causes cancer of the mouth, esophagus (the passage that connects the throat to the stomach), and pancreas (a gland that helps with digestion and maintaining proper blood sugar levels)^{1,2}
- Is associated with diseases of the mouth^{1,3}
- Can increase risks for early delivery and stillbirth when used during pregnancy²
- Can cause nicotine poisoning in children⁴
- May increase the risk for death from heart disease and stroke^{1,3}

Using smokeless products can cause serious health problems. Protect your health; don't start. If you do use them, quit.

Addiction to Smokeless Tobacco

- Smokeless tobacco contains nicotine, which is highly addictive.^{1,2}
- Because young people who use smokeless tobacco can become addicted to nicotine, they may be more likely to also become cigarette smokers.⁵

Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer

- Many smokeless tobacco products contain cancer-causing chemicals.^{1,6}
 - The most harmful chemicals are tobacco-specific nitrosamines, which form during the growing, curing, fermenting, and aging of tobacco. The amount of these chemicals varies by product.¹
 - The higher the levels of these chemicals, the greater the risk for cancer.²
 - Other chemicals found in tobacco can also cause cancer. These include:⁶
 - A radioactive element (polonium-210) found in tobacco fertilizer
 - Chemicals formed when tobacco is cured with heat (polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons—also known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons)
 - Harmful metals (arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, lead, nickel, mercury)
- Smokeless tobacco causes cancer of the mouth, esophagus, and pancreas.¹

Smokeless Tobacco and Oral Disease

- Smokeless tobacco can cause white or gray patches inside the mouth (leukoplakia) that can lead to cancer.¹
- Smokeless tobacco can cause gum disease, tooth decay, and tooth loss.^{1,3}

Reproductive and Developmental Risks

- Using smokeless tobacco during pregnancy can increase the risk for early delivery and stillbirth.²
- Nicotine in smokeless tobacco products that are used during pregnancy can affect how a baby's brain develops before birth.^{2,7}

Other Risks

- Using smokeless tobacco increases the risk for death from heart disease and stroke.^{1,3}
- Smokeless tobacco can cause nicotine poisoning in children.⁴
- Additional research is needed to examine long-term effects of newer smokeless tobacco products, such as dissolvables and U.S. snus.

References

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For Further Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Office on Smoking and Health

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