

Chewing tobacco

Why this is awful for your health. *by Dr. Susan Maples*

If I could waive a magic wand and get my wish, I'd cut all the chains that bind people to their nicotine addiction. Many people (mostly young men) start using "smokeless" tobacco, thinking it will be less addictive and better for them than cigarettes. "Dipping" is often associated with outdoor team sport cultures such as baseball or football. Nicotine in any form is ridiculously addictive--perhaps the most brain-addictive molecule on the planet.

There are two main types of "smokeless" tobacco:

- 1) "Chew" which is available as loose leaves, plugs, or twists.
- 2) "Snuff" is more finely cut or powdered tobacco. It is available loose, in strips, or in small pouches similar to tea bags.

Either form of "smokeless" tobacco is usually tucked between the gums and cheek/lower lip. The nicotine is absorbed

into the body through the mucosa (cheek tissue), stimulating nicotine addiction and a cascade of other health threats, including cancer.

Chewing tobacco is laden with 4,000 herbicides and pesticide chemicals that are not rinsed off before curing. In addition, there are added chemicals to enhance taste and absorption. Thirty of these chemicals have been proven cancer-causers. The most common of these deadly life-threatening cancers are oral cancers (mouth, cheeks, gums, lips, tongue), throat cancer (esophageal), as well as stomach and pancreatic cancer.

Oral cancer shows up as a little spot that can be dark, red or white. It often hides or is disguised by the white ruffled tissue that is always present in the absorption site. Oral cancers are hard to detect and when we do, we are usually seeing just the tip of the iceberg.

Sadly, with all the headway we have made in curing other types of cancers, oral/pharyngeal cancer has only a 57

percent, five-year survival rate. If you are one of the lucky survivors, the surgery and radiation will disfigure your face and make your day-to-day life miserable. The radical removal (sections) of tongue, lip or jaw bone removal can be unbelievably extensive. I have been shocked when the little bit of cancer we saw in the mouth was so broad in reach under the tissue.

Orally, smokeless tobacco causes inflammation of the gums (gingivitis), gum and bone recession (causing exposure of long roots), increased risk of tooth/root decay and unnecessary tooth loss.

There is no safe level of tobacco use. It is all life-altering and life-threatening. In fact, predicted life expectancy of a tobacco abuser is about 14 years less than that of a non-tobacco abuser.

Will you help me spread the news? Hand a high school student this article and let him grow his defense to the ugly offer: "C'mon, try it...just a little pinch between the tooth and gums."



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Congrats to Dr. Susan who was just inducted as a Master Level Clinician in the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.

If you have missing, broken, or failing teeth and would like to consider a permanent and affordable solution, please contact us for a complimentary consultation!

