

## 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. There is no safe level of tobacco use. Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes. Using it can cause cancer, oral health problems and nicotine addiction.

### Types

The two main types of smokeless tobacco in the United States are chewing tobacco and snuff.

Chewing tobacco comes in these forms:

- **Loose leaf:** Cured tobacco strips are typically sweetened and packaged in foil pouches. To use, a piece is taken from a pouch and placed between the cheek and gums.
- **Plug:** These cured tobacco leaves are pressed together into a cake, or "plug," form and are wrapped in a tobacco leaf. The user takes some from a pouch and places them between the cheek and gums.
- **Twist (or Roll):** These cured tobacco leaves are often flavored and twisted together to resemble rope. A piece is cut off from the twist and is placed between the cheek and gums.
- **Snuff:** It is finely ground tobacco that can be dry, moist or packaged in sachets. Although some forms of snuff can be used by sniffing or inhaling into the nose, most smokeless tobacco users place the product between their gum and cheek. Users suck or chew on the tobacco, and saliva can be spat out or swallowed.
- **Moist:** This is cured and fermented tobacco processed into fine particles and often packaged in round cans. A serving is a pinch, or "dip," that is placed between the cheek or lip and gums.
- **Dry:** Fire-cured tobacco is processed into a powder. A user takes a pinch of powder orally, or it is inhaled through the nostrils.
- **Sachets:** Moist snuff is packaged in ready-to-use pouches that resemble small tea bags. A sachet is used by placing it between the cheek or teeth and gums.

The tobacco industry has also developed newer smokeless tobacco products, such as lozenges, tablets, tabs, strips and sticks.

### Health

#### Effects

Cancer:

- Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents (carcinogens).
- Smokeless tobacco is a known cause of human cancer; it increases the risk of developing cancer of the oral cavity.

#### Oral health:

- Smokeless tobacco is also strongly associated with leukoplakia, a precancerous lesion of the soft tissue in the mouth that consists of a white patch or plaque that cannot be scraped off.
- Smokeless tobacco is associated with recession of the gums, gum disease and tooth decay.

#### Reproductive health:

- Smokeless tobacco use during pregnancy increases the risks for preeclampsia (a condition that may include high blood pressure, fluid retention and swelling), premature birth and low birth weight.
- Smokeless tobacco use by men causes reduced sperm count and abnormal sperm cells.

#### Nicotine addiction:

- Smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.
- Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

## Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- National Cancer Institute: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)
- HealthCare.gov: [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

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