

LEARN ABOUT SMOKELESS TOBACCO



This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is Smokeless Tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco is a kind of tobacco that people put in their mouths instead of smoking. Even though it's not smoked, it can still be very harmful

Smokeless Tobacco Health Problems

- It can be addictive. Smokeless tobacco has nicotine, a drug that makes people want to keep using it
- It can cause cancer in the mouth, throat, esophagus (the tube that connects your throat to your stomach), and pancreas (an organ that helps with digestion and blood sugar)
- It can damage the mouth, causing sores, gum disease, and tooth loss
- It can hurt babies before they are born if used during pregnancy. It may lead to early birth or even stillbirth (when a baby dies before being born)
- Children who accidentally eat smokeless tobacco can get very sick from nicotine poisoning
- It can raise the risk of heart disease and strokes (when blood stops flowing to the brain)

Nicotine and Addiction

- Nicotine is the drug in smokeless tobacco that makes it hard to quit.
- It can harm the brain, especially in kids and teens whose brains are still growing
- Kids who use smokeless tobacco may also start smoking cigarettes later on

Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer

Smokeless tobacco contains chemicals that can cause cancer. Some harmful things in it include:

- A radioactive chemical (called polonium-210) used in fertilizer
- Metals like lead, mercury, and nickel
- Chemicals from heat used to dry tobacco

Mouth and Gum Problems

- It can cause white or gray patches inside the mouth (called leukoplakia) that may turn into cancer
- It can lead to gum disease, cavities, and losing teeth

Other Dangers

- It raises the risk of heart attacks and strokes
- It can be very dangerous if small children eat it, even by accident