

Smokeless Tobacco

Cigarettes were introduced around the mid-1700s. By the mid-1900s, cigarette smoking became the most popular way to use tobacco. Smokeless tobacco has been around for a longtime but started to increase in use in the 1970's and early 1980's when advertising increased and people thought smokeless tobacco was a safe alternative to smoking. In the United States, it has been estimated that about 7.8 million people, 12 years and older currently use smokeless tobacco regularly.

Smokeless tobacco causes significant health risks and is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. It contains the same chemical as cigarettes (nicotine) and can still lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.

Holding one pinch of smokeless tobacco in your mouth for 30 minutes delivers as much nicotine as 3 to 4 cigarettes.

There are two types of smokeless tobacco that are most commonly used in the United States. Chewing tobacco comes in loose leaf, plug and twist form. Snuff is finely ground tobacco that can be dry, moist, or in bag-like pouches. Most smokeless tobacco users place the product in the cheek or between their gum and cheek, suck on the tobacco and spit out the juices, which is why smokeless tobacco is often referred to as spitting tobacco.

Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents (carcinogens) which are known causes of human cancer. It also increases the risk of developing oral cancer compared to cigarette smoking.

Nationally, smokeless tobacco use is higher among young white males; American Indians/Alaska Natives; people living in southern and north central states; and people who are employed in blue collar occupations, service jobs and who are unemployed.

In the United States, an estimated 3 percent of adults are current smokeless tobacco users (6 percent males vs. 0.3 percent females).

One study found some similarities between male and female smokeless tobacco use; on average, both sexes began using tobacco between 16 and 18 years; friends played a major role in initiating their use and about 25 percent of women use smokeless tobacco to help them quit stop smoking.

Another study found that more than 2,200 young people age 11-19 years of age try smokeless tobacco and 830 young people become regular users of smokeless tobacco daily. The data suggests that 824,000 young people first try smokeless tobacco with 304,000 becoming regulars.

An estimated 7 percent of high school students and 3 percent of middle school students are current smokeless tobacco users. Smokeless tobacco is more common among male than female high school students (12 percent vs. 2 percent). It is estimated that African American high school students use smokeless tobacco (3 percent) less than White (8 percent) and Hispanic (5 percent) students.

American Indian/Alaska Native children are the biggest users of smokeless tobacco (39%).

In 2001, \$219 million was spent to advertise moist and dry snuff and about \$18 million was spent to advertise chewing tobacco. A report by the Federal Trade Commission showed that in 2001 tobacco advertising in magazines increased to a record high of \$21.96 million. Also reaching record highs was the amount of money (\$17.89 million) spent on the distribution of free samples of smokeless tobacco products.