

The Truth about Spit Tobacco

If you're in junior or senior high, you may be familiar with spit tobacco.

Tobacco companies promote spit tobacco to people in your age group.

It is most commonly used by males involved with team sports.

What is spit tobacco made of?

Spit tobacco is a mixture of tobacco, nicotine, sweeteners, abrasives, salts and chemicals. Spit tobacco comes in two forms:

- Chew is a leafy tobacco sold in pouches or in brick form (plug tobacco). Users chew the tobacco for several hours to get an on-going high from the nicotine.
- Snuff is finely ground tobacco in powder form that is sold in small tins. Some people sniff it, but more common is moist snuff, which is held between the cheek and gum. Moisture releases the nicotine, which goes through the lining of the nose and mouth and into the bloodstream.

Spit tobacco is often flavoured with vanilla, green apple, cherry, mint or wintergreen, and sweetened with molasses or sugar – flavours that are appealing to youth.

Can using spit tobacco harm my health?

Spit tobacco has over 3,000 chemicals, including 28 known to cause cancer. Spit tobacco is not a safe substitute for cigarettes and

can harm your health in many ways. Eight to ten dips or chews a day provides the same amount of nicotine as smoking 30 to 40 cigarettes a day.

Short-term effects

- You can feel the effects of the nicotine in five to eight minutes. Nicotine causes your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to rise.
- Because the nicotine in tobacco is a stimulant, it can make you feel alert and energetic. It can also give a pleasurable “buzz” or “rush.”

Long-term effects

Spit tobacco can harm you health in many ways.

- The nicotine can give you higher blood pressure and irregular heartbeats.
- Constricted blood vessels (caused by the nicotine) can slow your reaction time and cause dizziness. An effect that decreases athletic performance.
- Can cause mouth sores that do not heal or bleed easily, or white or red leathery patches where tobacco is held in the mouth (e.g., in the cheeks, gums, or tongue.)
- You can develop tooth and gum disease including cavities, lost teeth, bad breath, and painful sores. The grit and sand in spit tobacco can scratch your teeth and wear away your tooth

enamel. Gums injured from the chemicals in spit tobacco will pull away from your teeth, leaving them sensitive to hot and cold. This damage is permanent.

- You can develop cancer of the mouth (lip, tongue, cheek, floor, and roof of the mouth) and throat.

What does spit tobacco cost?

Spit tobacco is expensive. Add up how much money you spend on spit tobacco every week. Multiply that by 52, and you will see how much money you can save in one year by quitting. Just think of what you could buy with the money you save!

Are you thinking about quitting?

Studies show that over half of spit tobacco users want to quit. There is no one right way to quit, but there are keys to quitting successfully:

- deciding to quit
- setting a date
- choosing a plan for quitting that works for you
- finding a way to deal with withdrawal symptoms
- staying off spit tobacco

Turn over for 6 steps to help you quit. >>>>>>

Six steps to help you quit.

STEP 1: Deciding to quit

It's important for you to know why you are quitting. Start by making a list of reasons why you want to quit. You may want to quit because

- you want to improve your athletic performance
- you don't like having bad breath and yellow teeth
- you want to have more energy and better health
- you don't like being addicted to nicotine
- you want to be in control of your life
- you don't want to get cancer.

Write out your own list and put it where you can look at it often. This will help to remind you why you've decided to quit.

STEP 2: Set a date to quit

It's important to make a plan for quitting. Set a date one or two weeks ahead, and plan to quit on that day. Stock up on things you can substitute for spit tobacco when cravings hit, such as sunflower seeds and sugarless gum. Develop plans to help you deal with high-risk situations – places, times and activities where you might have used spit tobacco in the past. You may decide to avoid certain friends or situations when you are first trying to quit.

STEP 3: Look for programs to help and see your doctor or dentist

Look into programs to help you quit such as the Nova Scotia Smokers' Helpline (1-877-513-5333) and local programs through Addiction Services (under Health in the Government Blue Pages in the phone book).

It's a good idea to get an oral exam to see if any effects of your tobacco use need treatment. Your doctor or dentist may also be able to provide information to help you quit.

STEP 4: Start a new routine

You may want to consider tapering off your use of spit tobacco the week before your actual quit day.

Here are some tips:

- Cut back on the number of dips you take each day.
- Practice using your gum or sunflower seeds instead of spit tobacco when you get cravings.
- Pay attention to any patterns in the places and times you have cravings. Practice finding other things to do during those times.

STEP 5: What to do on quitting day

Congratulations! You are on your way to a healthier life. Throw out all tobacco products. Be physically active and drink lots of water. Use your gum or seeds when cravings hit. If nicotine replacement therapy is part of your quit plan, be sure to use the nicotine gum or patch as directed on the package or check with your healthcare provider.



STEP 6: Staying free of spit tobacco

The first two weeks after your quit day will probably be the toughest. Keep reminding yourself why you quit, and when cravings hit, try to distract yourself until they pass. Be sure to reward yourself! Take the money you would have spent on tobacco and use it to buy yourself a treat or do something you enjoy.

What if I slip and start using spit tobacco again?

Don't feel discouraged! A slip-up doesn't mean that you have failed. For some people, slips can be a natural part of the quitting process. Slips are an opportunity to learn from your experiences, figure out what went wrong, create new plans to deal with high-risk situations, and take action again. Choose to learn from your slip. Quitting is possible. Keep working toward your goal to be tobacco-free.

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