

## **Top Facts: Spit Tobacco**

(also known as chew, dip or smokeless tobacco)

“I don’t smoke it. I don’t swallow it. So it must be a good substitute to smoking, right?”

**No. Spit tobacco is just as addictive and harmful as smoking.**

### **Spit Tobacco Facts**

There are two kinds of spit tobacco: snuff and chewing tobacco. The main difference is in the how the tobacco is prepared.

- Snuff is a fine-grain, moist form of tobacco. It can be sniffed through the nose, but is most often sucked on in the mouth.
- Chewing tobacco is a shredded or leafy form of tobacco.
- Both come either loose or in a pouch.

### **Spit Tobacco Health Facts<sup>1</sup>**

- Spit tobacco contains nicotine and is addictive when chewed.
- Spit tobacco contains at least 24 cancer-causing chemicals such as benzopyrene and formaldehyde.
  - Formaldehyde is a chemical used to preserve dead bodies and dead animals.
- Spit tobacco contains 3,000 other chemicals such as acetone (paint stripper), ammonia (toilet bowl cleaner), and cadmium (battery acid).

### **Effects of Spit Tobacco Use<sup>2</sup>**

- Immediate effects:
  - Bad breath
  - Stains on teeth
  - Mouth sores (70% of spit tobacco users have sores)
- Long term effects (however, some symptoms can occur earlier):
  - Cancer of the lips, tongue, floor of mouth, cheeks, gums, throat, voice box, and/or esophagus
  - Teeth can fall out
  - Lips and gums crack and bleed
  - Risk of heart attack and brain damage<sup>3</sup>

### **Symptoms of the Harmful Effects of Spit Tobacco<sup>3</sup>**

- A sore that will not heal in your mouth, on the inside of your cheek, or on your tongue
- A lump or white patch in your mouth or your gums
- Difficulty chewing food
- Difficulty moving your tongue and/or jaw
- Constant feeling of something in your throat that you cannot clear out

### **Spit Tobacco vs. Cigarettes**

- One dip contains five times the amount of nicotine as one cigarette.
- Ten dips a day equals the same amount of nicotine a smoker gets in 30-40 cigarettes a day.<sup>4</sup>

### **Who Uses Spit Tobacco?**

- Males have the highest rates:
  - 18-24 year olds: 3.6% males vs. less than 1% females<sup>1</sup>
  - High school students: 6.7% males vs. 2.2% females<sup>5</sup>
- Do most athletes use spit tobacco?

- No. According to data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association, 84% of athletes do not use spit tobacco.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute: Cancer Control and Population Sciences. Smokeless Tobacco: Just the Facts! Retrieved July 1, 2005, from the World Wide Web at [http://dccps.nci.nih.gov/tcvb/less\\_facts.html](http://dccps.nci.nih.gov/tcvb/less_facts.html)

<sup>2</sup> Teens Health. (2005). Smokeless tobacco. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/tobacco/smokeless.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/tobacco/smokeless.html)

<sup>3</sup> California Dental Association. (2005). If You Chew...Quit. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [www.cda.org/articles/smokelesstobacco.htm](http://www.cda.org/articles/smokelesstobacco.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Tobacco Truth: Tobacco facts. Spit Tobacco. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [www.tobaccofacts.org/tob\\_truth/spit.html](http://www.tobaccofacts.org/tob_truth/spit.html).

<sup>5</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association.