

Strike Out Spit Tobacco



Spit Tobacco and Oral Cancer: No Excuses

Strike One: Addiction. **Strike Two:** Cancer. **Strike Three:** You're out of time, you're out of chances, you're out of here. Using spit tobacco doesn't have to be part of the game. It's dangerous. It's addictive. It's deadly. Get into the game -- strike out spit tobacco.

"I Can Quit Anytime"

Don't fool yourself. Nicotine is just as addictive as cocaine or heroin. Each year, more than 300,000 young people become addicted.

As your body adapts to the nicotine, you need more and more of it to get the same buzz.

Some addicts use spit tobacco when they sleep so they can keep their nicotine high through the night.

"It's Safer Than Cigarettes"

Think spit tobacco is a safe alternative to cigarettes? Think again. Dip and chew contain more nicotine than cigarettes. Holding an average size dip in your mouth for 30 minutes gives you as much nicotine as smoking three cigarettes.

"The Dentist Can Just Scrape It Off"

Oral cancers are among the toughest to treat. They can spread rapidly throughout the body.

Surgery to remove the cancer is often disfiguring. Patients can lose large parts of their tongue, throat, jaw and chin. For many, surgery is just the first step.

Radiation therapy is used to kill the cancer cells that surgery might have missed. The side effects of radiation include mouth sores, burns on the inside and outside of the neck, cracked and peeling lips, dry, itchy skin and physical and mental exhaustion.

Radiation therapy can also lead to loss of saliva, making it hard to chew and swallow. Without saliva your body loses its ability to breakdown many foods, including meat, bread and raw vegetables.

Just ask yourself: do you want all your meals prepared in a blender?

"It Will Never Happen to Me"

Consider a few statistics...

- ❖ 30,000 new cases of oral cancer are diagnosed every year.
- ❖ Almost one-third of those people will die.
- ❖ Half of the people diagnosed with oral cancer will die within five years.
- ❖ By using spit tobacco, you are 50 times more likely than a non-user to contract oral cancer.

"I Just Need to Brush More Often"

Brushing and flossing will not undo the damage to your teeth and gums. There's one way to reverse the damage: stop using spit tobacco.

By the time you notice the signs of oral cancer, it may already be too late. If you do experience any symptoms, you should make an appointment with your physician or dentist immediately.

Some symptoms of oral cancer:

- ❖ Any sign of irritation, like tenderness, burning or a sore throat that will not heal
- ❖ Pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or lips
- ❖ Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- ❖ Color changes to your oral soft tissues (gray, red or white spots or patches), rather than a healthy pink color
- ❖ Development of a lump, or a leathery, wrinkled or bumpy patch inside your mouth

If you use spit tobacco, today is a good day to stop. If you're already tobacco-free, please, stay that way.

Know the Score

What is spit tobacco?

Snuff or 'dip': a pinch of ground up moist tobacco that is stuck between the lip and gum

Chew or a 'wad': shredded tobacco leaves placed between the cheek and gum

Plug: shredded tobacco leaves that are pressed into a hard block and placed between the cheek and gum

What's in spit tobacco?

Nicotine: This is a poisonous and highly addictive drug. Each tin of snuff contains a lethal dose of nicotine.

Chemicals: Processed tobacco contains more than 30,000 chemical compounds, and at least 28 of those chemicals can cause cancer.

Sand and grit: These harsh abrasives can wear down the surface of your teeth and scratch your cheeks and gums, allowing the nicotine and chemicals to go directly into your bloodstream.

Sugar and Salt: These are added to spit tobacco to hide its true taste. The sugar increases your risk for tooth decay, and the salt can lead to high blood pressure and kidney disease.

Resources

For more information on the dangers of spit tobacco, or for tips on how to quit, contact the following organizations:

National Spit Tobacco Education Program
www.nstep.org

Georgia Spit Tobacco Education Program
Sue Dodd, Director of Programs and Education
scdodd@mindspring.com

Oral Health America
www.oralhealthamerica.org

American Cancer Society
1.800.ACS.2345
www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute
1.800.422.6237
www.cancer.gov



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