

Cheltenham Communities That Care

ORAL TOBACCO & NICOTINE PRODUCTS

By Wendy Rosenfeld, Community Mobilizer

You may be familiar with tobacco and nicotine products in the form of cigarettes, pipes, cigars, cigarillos, hookahs, and vapes, but how much do you know about *oral* tobacco and nicotine products?

Types Of Oral Tobacco/Nicotine Products

There are three main types of oral tobacco/nicotine products: (1) chewing tobacco, (2) snus, and (3) snuff.



1. Chewing Tobacco: a clump of tobacco leaves that is placed in the mouth, usually between the gum and cheek or the gum and lower lip, often resulting in a noticeable lump. Chewing tobacco can be plain, sweetened, or flavored, and the taste that is drawn out by the user is absorbed into the mouth, along with nicotine and other harmful chemicals. These loose leaves are held together in various ways:

- **Plugs:** tobacco leaves that are packed together with the use of a sweetener
- **Pellets or Bits:** tobacco leaves that are formed into pellets
- **Twists:** strands of tobacco leaves that are twisted or braided together
- **Pinch or Dip:** tobacco that is either shredded or made into a powder form. The powder can also be inhaled, which creates additional health risks associated with the heart and lungs.

Chewing tobacco is also known as spit tobacco, since the tobacco that is mixed with the saliva in the mouth should be spit out, instead of swallowed.



2. Snus: a pouch that contains tobacco in a powder form. It is placed in the mouth the same way as chewing tobacco. Since snus does not produce a lot of saliva, excess tobacco juice is often swallowed rather than spit out.

The nicotine content of pouches can be quite large. For example, in a 6 mg pouch, the nicotine ingested could be equal to smoking approximately 3 packs of cigarettes or 1½ vape pods of 2% vape juice per day (*American Lung Association, July 30, 2024*).



3. Snuff: finely ground moist or dry tobacco leaves offered in a variety of scents and flavors. Snuff can be chewed, rubbed onto the gums, placed inside the mouth either by the cheek or behind the lower lip, or inhaled through the nose.

As with chewing tobacco, a lot of saliva is formed, and the mix of saliva and tobacco juice should be spit out, instead of swallowed.

Health Risks Of Oral Tobacco/Nicotine Products

There is no safe method for using tobacco or nicotine. Oral tobacco/nicotine products can cause cancer in the mouth, throat, esophagus, and pancreas, as well as bad breath, discoloration and loss of teeth, gum disease, and damage to the heart, skin, eyes, blood vessels, liver, kidney, and reproductive organs. If inhaled, it can damage the lungs. Overconsumption can lead to nicotine poisonings.



All forms of tobacco contain nicotine, and while there are tobacco-less products on the market, these products still contain nicotine, which leads to both health risks and addiction.

Other Oral Tobacco/Nicotine Products

Two other oral tobacco/nicotine products of note are **Dissolvable Tobacco/Non-Tobacco Nicotine** (sticks, thin strips, tablets, pellets, lozenges, and mints that melt in the mouth) and **Tobacco/Non-Tobacco Nicotine Chewing Gum**.



Even though both products are used for tobacco/nicotine cessation, they could easily be confused with non-nicotine products, resulting in youth accidentally consuming them.

What You Can Do

- Remember, in the U.S., it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase and/or use tobacco/nicotine products.
- It's important to research and learn the facts about tobacco/nicotine risks and health concerns. Pediatricians are reliable resources and can provide guidance if you have any questions.
- When discussing tobacco/nicotine use with your child, talk to them with love, concern, and empathy, instead of demands or preaching.

American Lung Association
www.lung.org

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.healthychildren.org

Nemours Teen Health
kidshealth.org/teens/smokeless.html

Talk. They Hear You
www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you



**Resources
&
References**