

# Smokeless Tobacco: Tips on How to Stop

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## **Why is it hard to quit using smokeless tobacco?**

Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco) contains nicotine, a very addictive substance that causes changes in the way you think and act. If you are addicted to nicotine, you crave the "buzz" you get from using smokeless tobacco, and you have to use more and more to get the effect you want.

Smokeless tobacco puts more nicotine into your bloodstream than cigarettes do. This is one reason why people who chew or dip tobacco regularly may think that quitting smokeless tobacco is even harder than quitting cigarette smoking.

Using smokeless tobacco might also be a habit for you when you're in certain situations or with certain people. For example, you may always chew tobacco when you go to a sporting event or when you watch TV. It can be hard to break this pattern of behavior.

However, many smokeless tobacco users have quit successfully – and so can you. Your family doctor can help you quit.

## **Why is it important for me to stop using smokeless tobacco?**

The use of any tobacco product has both immediate and long-term effects on your health and overall well-being. Smokeless tobacco stains and wears down your teeth, causes your gums to recede (peel back) and produces mouth sores. Bad breath is also a common problem. Over time, the use of smokeless tobacco can cause mouth cancer. Nicotine from smokeless tobacco also raises blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and can make it more likely that you will have a heart attack.

It is important for you to have your own reasons for wanting to stop using smokeless tobacco. In addition to health effects, you may be concerned about saving money, giving up an addictive habit or setting a good example for family members and friends. Write down your reasons for wanting to quit using smokeless tobacco. Then keep your list in places where you can see it often during your efforts to stop.

## **What can I do to get ready to quit using smokeless tobacco?**

Set a date to quit and stick to it. Choose a date 1 to 2 weeks from today. Quitting can be hard, so develop a plan that works for you. Think ahead about times when you will want to chew or dip, and plan what you will do instead. Prepare yourself for quitting by identifying the times when you will want smokeless tobacco the most. Plan to avoid those situations or to have tobacco substitutes with you (such as sunflower seeds or chewing gum). Get rid of all your chewing tobacco or snuff before your quit date. Start cutting down now on the amount you chew or dip.

Get support from your family, friends and doctor. Even better, have a friend or family member who uses smokeless tobacco stop chewing or dipping at the same time that you do. Studies have shown that people who have the support of family and friends are more successful at quitting. Your doctor may also be able to recommend a support program that might help you quit.

## **What can I use to replace smokeless tobacco?**

You might think about using nicotine gum or another nicotine replacement product to help get over your addiction to nicotine. Generally, people who use 3 or more tins or pouches a week, people who use smokeless tobacco within 30 minutes after they wake up, and people who usually swallow tobacco juice when they chew or dip benefit most from the nicotine replacement. Talk to your doctor about whether nicotine replacement is right for you.

Find an oral substitute for smokeless tobacco that you enjoy. This may be non-tobacco mint leaf snuff, sugarless gum or hard candy, beef jerky or sunflower seeds. Don't substitute cigarette smoking for smokeless tobacco. Stop using all tobacco products.

Find activities to do when you want to chew or dip. Many people chew or dip when they are bored. Instead, take a walk or a quick jog, lift weights, take a hot shower to relax, or do any activity you enjoy that will keep your mind off smokeless tobacco.

### **What if I slip up and start using smokeless tobacco again?**

This is normal. Learn from your slip! Think about what you can do to avoid that situation next time. Plan ways to handle things without going back to using smokeless tobacco.

Once you quit, congratulate yourself. You've worked hard! Celebrate beating the habit by using the money you would have spent on smokeless tobacco to buy yourself a present or do something that you enjoy.

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