



SMOKELESS TOBACCO AND KIDS

Since 1970, smokeless, or spit, tobacco has gone from a product used primarily by older men to one used predominantly by young men and boys. This trend has occurred as smokeless tobacco promotions have increased dramatically and a new generation of smokeless tobacco products has hit the market. Far from being a “safe” alternative to cigarette smoking, smokeless tobacco use increases the risk of developing many health problems. Furthermore, evidence shows that adolescent boys who use smokeless tobacco products have a higher risk of becoming cigarette smokers within four years.¹

In 1970, men 65 and older were almost six times as likely as those aged 18 to 24 to use spit tobacco regularly (12.7 vs. 2.2 percent). By 1991, however, young men were 50 percent more likely than the oldest men to be regular users. (8.4 vs. 5.6 percent).² This pattern holds especially true for moist snuff, the most popular type of smokeless tobacco. From 1970 to 1991, the regular use of moist snuff by 18 to 24 year old men increased almost ten-fold, from less than one percent to 6.2 percent. Conversely, use among men 65 and older decreased by almost half, from four percent to 2.2 percent.³ Among all high school seniors who have ever used spit tobacco, almost three-fourths began by the ninth grade.⁴

Despite some recent declines in youth spit tobacco use, 13.4 percent of U.S. high school boys and 2.3 percent of high school girls currently use smokeless tobacco products. In some states, smokeless tobacco use among high school boys is particularly high, including Kentucky (26.7 percent), Montana (20.3 percent), Oklahoma (24.8 percent), Tennessee (22.8 percent), West Virginia (27.0 percent), and Wyoming (21.3 percent).⁵

The U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (UST) is the biggest smokeless tobacco company in the U.S. and controls two-thirds of the moist snuff tobacco market (with leading premium brands Skoal and Copenhagen).⁶ Reynolds-American Tobacco Company recently acquired the second largest smokeless tobacco company in the U.S., Conwood Smokeless Tobacco Company (makers of Grizzly and Kodiak), which has nearly one-fourth share of the moist snuff market,⁷ and other cigarette companies have also started test marketing their own smokeless tobacco products.

Marketing Smokeless Tobacco to Kids

According to internal company documents, UST developed a strategy for hooking new spit-tobacco users, meaning kids, some time ago. As one document states:

*New users of smokeless tobacco -- attracted to the product for a variety of reasons -- are most likely to begin with products that are milder tasting, more flavored, and/or easier to control in the mouth. After a period of time, there is a natural progression of product switching to brands that are more full-bodied, less flavored, have more concentrated 'tobacco taste' than the entry brand.*⁸

Following this strategy, between 1983 to 1984, UST introduced Skoal Bandits and Skoal Long Cut, designed to “graduate” new users from beginner strength to stronger, more potent products. A 1985 internal UST newsletter indicates the company’s desire to appeal to youth: “Skoal Bandits is the introductory product, and then we look towards establishing a normal graduation process.”⁹ In 1993, cherry flavoring was added to UST’s Skoal Long Cut, another starter product. A former UST sales representative revealed that “Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy, if you know what I’m saying.”¹⁰ According to UST’s 2005 Annual Report, flavored products (that now include flavors such as apple, peach, vanilla, berry blend, and citrus blend) account for more than 11 percent of all moist snuff sales.¹¹ UST launched “new and improved” Skoal Bandits in August 2006.¹²

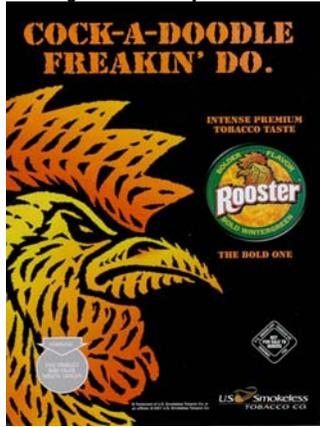
Smokeless tobacco products have been marketed to youth through a number of channels, including sporting events like auto racing and rodeos that are widely attended by kids. Although the state tobacco settlement agreements have limited UST’s ability to continue to do brand-name sponsorships of events and teams, UST continues to be a promotional sponsor of both professional motorsports and rodeo and bull riding.¹³ As the general manager of the College Finals said, “U.S. Tobacco is the oldest and best

friend college rodeo ever had.”¹⁴ Some cities, including Boulder and Greeley, CO, have prohibited free tobacco product giveaways, making it more difficult for UST to lure new users at these events.

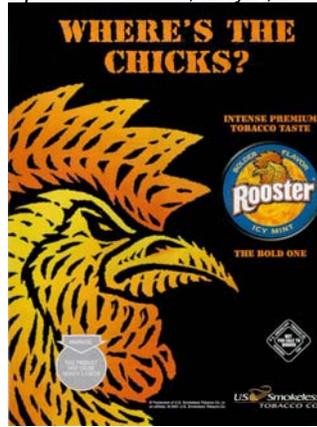
Back in 1999, UST ran a full-color advertising insert for its Rooster brand smokeless tobacco in San Diego State University’s college paper, the *Daily Aztec*. The ad offered a sweepstakes for an all expenses paid trip to the Playboy mansion and, in direct violation of California law, included a \$1.00 coupon. State enforcement efforts related to the ad forced UST to pay a fine of \$150,000 and pay for a parallel ad insert opposing smokeless tobacco use.

Continuing its efforts to lure and maintain young users, in 2001, UST ran a magazine ad for its Rooster brand in *Rolling Stone* with the phrase, “Cock-A-Doodle Freakin’ Do.” After UST received criticism for the ad’s blatant appeal to youth, it promised not to use those ads anymore. But less than a year later, ads for Rooster appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, bearing the same image as before, but with the phrases, “Where’s The Chicks?,” and “Birds of a Feather Party Together.”

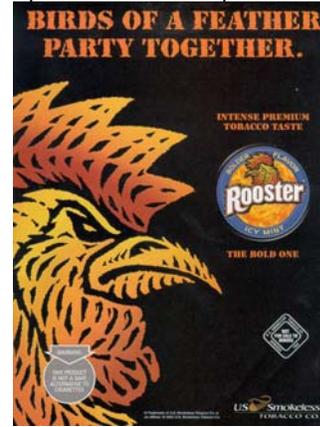
Rolling Stone, July 3, 2001



Sports Illustrated, May 6, 2002



Sports Illustrated, April 4, 2002



From 1998 to 2005 (the most recent year for which data are available), the total advertising and marketing expenditures of the top-five smokeless tobacco companies in the U.S. (Conwood Company, National Tobacco Company, Swedish Match North America, Inc., Swisher International, and UST) increased by 72.4 percent. In 2005, these smokeless tobacco companies spent more than \$250.7 million to advertise and market their products.¹⁵ Some of these funds pay for smokeless tobacco ads in magazines with high youth readership, such as *Sports Illustrated* and *Rolling Stone*.¹⁶ In fact, despite the restrictions placed on youth advertising by the Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, UST has continued to advertise in youth-oriented magazines. From 1997 to 2001, UST’s expenditures in youth magazines increased 161 percent, from \$3.6 million to \$9.4 million.¹⁷

Given the track record of UST and its marketing behavior aimed at kids and adolescents, of equal or greater concern is the recent entry of Reynolds-American – labeled as a “serial violator” of the Master Settlement Agreement by the U.S. Department of Justice – into the smokeless tobacco market with its purchase of Conwood. For instance, in 2006, the California Supreme Court ruled that R.J. Reynolds had violated state’s ban on free distribution of cigarettes at events attended by minors on six separate occasions.¹⁸

Other notable smokeless tobacco products that have been launched in the last several years include UST’s product Revel. UST test marketed Revel as a way to consume tobacco in places or situations when smoking is not allowed or is not socially acceptable.¹⁹ Star Scientific’s Ariva tobacco lozenges and Stonewall Hard Snuff, both dissolvable tobacco tablets, are meant to replace cigarettes in situations where smokers cannot smoke. The website states, “Dissolvable tobacco has no boundaries, there are no locations or situations where you cannot use it and nobody can tell you’re using it.”²⁰ In an agreement with Star Scientific and just prior to its merger with R.J. Reynolds, Brown & Williamson briefly test marketed Interval tobacco tabs, which were similar to the Star Scientific products.²¹

Seeing the downward trend in smoking rates and the increasing popularity of smokeless tobacco products, cigarette companies have released their own smokeless tobacco products that draw on the brand names of their popular cigarettes to attract new users. R.J. Reynolds’s Camel Snus, Philip Morris USA’s Marlboro Snus, Liggett Group’s Grand Prix Snus, and Lorillard’s Triumph Snus have been

released into test market within the last year. Snus are small, teabag-like pouches containing tobacco and other flavorings that users place between their upper gum and lip. Because these products do not require spitting, their use can be easily concealed. One high school student admitted using Camel Snus during class, saying, "It's easy, it's super-discreet...and none of the teachers will ever know what I'm doing."²²

These new products concern public health organizations because they may lure even more kids into smokeless tobacco use and addiction – because of their novelty, the misconception that they are a “safe” form of tobacco use, and they can be consumed much less conspicuously than either cigarettes or existing spit tobacco products at home, in school, and in other locations. Furthermore, cigarette smokers who might ultimately quit because of the social stigma associated with smoking, the inconvenience caused by smoking restrictions at work and elsewhere, or a desire to protect their family and friends from secondhand smoke may instead switch to smokeless tobacco products.

Harms from Smokeless Tobacco Use

Smokeless tobacco use can lead to oral cancer, gum disease, and nicotine addiction; and it increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks.²³ More specifically:

- Smokeless tobacco causes leukoplakia, a disease of the mouth characterized by white patches and oral lesions on the cheeks, gums, and/or tongue. Leukoplakia, which can lead to oral cancer, occurs in more than half of all users in the first three years of use. Studies have found that 60 to 78 percent of spit tobacco users have oral lesions.²⁴
- Constant exposure to tobacco juice causes cancer of the esophagus, pharynx, larynx, stomach and pancreas. Smokeless tobacco users are at heightened risk for oral cancer compared to non-users and these cancers can form within five years of regular use.²⁵
- A 2008 study from the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded that smokeless tobacco users have an 80 percent higher risk of developing oral cancer and a 60 percent higher risk of developing pancreatic and esophageal cancer.²⁶
- Smokeless tobacco contains nitrosamines – proven and potent carcinogens.²⁷ A study by the American Health Foundation for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts found that the level of cancer causing tobacco specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) in U.S. oral moist snuff brands were significantly higher than comparable Swedish Match brands. These data suggest that it is possible for smokeless tobacco companies to produce oral snuff with significantly lower TSNA levels.²⁸
- Chewing tobacco has been linked to dental caries. A study by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found chewing tobacco users were four times more likely than non-users to have decayed dental root surfaces. Spit tobacco also causes gum disease (gingivitis), which can lead to bone and tooth loss.²⁹
- A study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that “snuff use may be a gateway form of nicotine dosing among males in the United States that may lead to subsequent cigarette smoking.” Further, the study found that “the prevalence of smoking was substantially higher among men who had quit using snuff than among those who had never used snuff, suggesting that more than 40% of men who had been snuff users continued or initiated smoking.”³⁰

Despite all the evidence of the harms of smokeless tobacco, in April 1999, a spokesperson for UST, quoted in the *Providence Journal*, claimed that it has not been “scientifically established” that smokeless tobacco is “a cause of oral cancer.” The Rhode Island Attorney General subsequently filed a legal action against UST for violating the multi-state settlement agreement’s provisions prohibiting false statements about the health effects of tobacco products. As a result, UST was required to formally acknowledge that the Surgeon General and other public health authorities have concluded that smokeless tobacco is

²² At present, new tobacco products that do not make explicit health-promotion claims are not subject to any government oversight, even to the extent of other consumable products such as foods or beverages. Accordingly, the new spitless tobacco products will enter the market without any independent testing regarding either their inherent harmfulness or their likely impact on overall tobacco use levels or public health. To remedy this problem, the public health community has urged Congress to provide the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with the authority it needs over tobacco products and their marketing to prevent and reduce associated harms. So far, however, the U.S. Congress has not done so.

addictive and can cause oral cancer and to pay \$15,000 to the Attorney General's office for efforts to prevent Rhode Island youths from using tobacco.

Spit Tobacco and Other Drugs

High school students who use spit tobacco 20 to 30 days per month are nearly four times more likely to currently use marijuana than nonusers, almost three times more likely to ever use cocaine, and nearly three times more likely to ever use inhalants to get high. In addition, heavy users of smokeless or spit tobacco are almost 16 times more likely than nonusers are to currently consume alcohol, as well.³¹

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, July 9, 2008 / Ann Boonn

Types of Spit Tobacco

- *Oral (moist) snuff* is a finely cut, processed tobacco, which the user places between the cheek and gum, that releases nicotine which, in turn, is absorbed by the membranes of the mouth.
- *Looseleaf* chewing tobacco is stripped and processed cigar-type tobacco leaves that are loosely packed to form small strips, often sold in a foil-lined pouch and usually treated with sugar or licorice.
- *Plug* chewing tobacco consists of small, oblong blocks of semi-soft chewing tobacco that often contain sweeteners and other flavoring agents.
- *Nasal snuff* is a fine tobacco powder that is sniffed into the nostrils. Flavorings may be added during fermentation, and perfumes may be added after grinding.

For more information on the problem of spit tobacco use, especially among kids, see the National Spit Tobacco Education Network (www.nstep.org/nstep.htm) and the Texas Spit Tobacco Prevention Network (<http://home.flash.net/~stopn/NonHome.html>).

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⁷ "Reynolds American Enters Smokeless Tobacco Category Via Acquisition of Conwood: \$3.5 Billion Acquisition of Nation's No. 2 Company in Growing Moist Snuff Category," Press Release, April 25, 2006, <http://www.reynoldsamerican.com/News/ViewRelease.asp?docID=1121>.

⁸ "The Marketing of Nicotine Addiction by One Oral Snuff Manufacturer," *Tobacco Control* 4(1), Spring 1995.

⁹ "The Marketing of Nicotine Addiction by One Oral Snuff Manufacturer," *Tobacco Control* 4(1), Spring 1995.

¹⁰ Freedman, AM, "How a Tobacco Giant Doctors Snuff Brands to Boost Their Kick," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1994.

¹¹ 2005 Annual Report & 2006 Proxy UST, see <http://ccbn.mobular.net/ccbn/7/1301/1391/print/print.pdf>.

¹² UST, "New and Improved Skoal Bandits(R) to Debut in August 2006," Press Release, March 14, 2006.

¹³ UST website, accessed May 7, 2008, <http://www.ustinc.com/>.

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¹⁵ Federal Trade Commission (FTC), *Federal Trade Commission Smokeless Tobacco Report for the Years 2002-2005*, 2007, <http://www.ftc.gov/reports/tobacco/02-05smokeless0623105.pdf>.

¹⁶ Morrison, MA, et al., "Under the Radar: Smokeless Tobacco Advertising in Magazines With Substantial Youth Readership," *American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)* 98:543-548, 2008. See also, *Sports Illustrated*, July 30, 2001 and *Rolling Stone*, July 5, 2001.

¹⁷ Massachusetts Department of Public Health, *Smokeless Tobacco Advertising Expenditures Before and After the Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement: A Report of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health*, May 2002, <http://tobaccofreekids.org/pressoffice/release503/smokeless.pdf>.

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