



Wellness Tips To Better Your Life

# In Flight Wellness Weekly

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Healthy Weight & Nutritional Fitness | Physical Activity | Tobacco Free Living | Sleep Optimization

## What Are You Willing To Put Into Your Mouth?



Tobacco use is one of the leading causes of preventable illness and diseases in the United States and accounts for more than 4.9 million deaths per year. These diseases and illnesses include: heart attack; stroke; asthma; chronic cough; cancer of the lungs, stomach, kidney, bladder, throat and mouth. Yet millions of young Americans each year will try smoking or use a tobacco product at least once before reaching the age of 21.

### Tobacco Use And Oral Health Dangers

There are more than 200,000 dentist and dental hygienist in the United States that see the insides of more than 60% of the US populations mouths, with each seeing between 8 and 15 per day. Diseases and illnesses caused by tobacco use are preventable. There are three significant health dangers that the use of tobacco products have on the oral cavity - oral cancers, pre-cancers and gum disease. The continued use of any tobacco product, to include e-cigarettes, hookahs, smoking water pipes, or cigars can have lasting health effects on the mouth, pharynx (throat), larynx (vocal chords), esophagus, and stomach.

### The Harmful Chemicals Found In Smokeless Tobacco

The most common form of tobacco that affects the mouth and throat is smokeless tobacco products like dip, chew and snuff. Chewing tobacco or dip - available as loose leaf, plugs (bricks), or as a twist of small like rope - can easily be placed between the cheek and the lower lip and sits towards the back of the mouth.

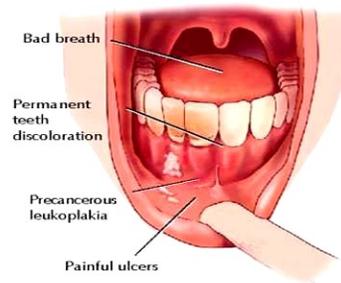
Snuff - a finely cut powdered tobacco - is available loose, as a dissolvable lozenge or strip, or in pouches similar to tea bags. When placed in the mouth, more than 28 harmful chemicals are absorbed into the bloodstream. These harmful chemicals include Polonium 210 (nuclear waste), N-Nitrosamines (cancer-causing) Formaldehyde (embalming fluid), Nicotine (addictive drug), Cadmium (used in batteries and nuclear reactor shields), Cyanide (poisonous compound), Arsenic (poisonous metallic element, Benzene (used in insecticides and motor fuels) and Lead (nerve poison). Combined, these chemicals lead to oral health issues as well as other serious health problems.



### How Smokeless Tobacco Affects Mouth and Throat Health

Smokeless tobacco permanently discolors teeth, causes halitosis (bad breath), and may contribute to tooth loss. Smokeless tobacco contains a lot of sugar which forms an acid that may eat away the tooth enamel, causing cavities and mouth sores. Also, its direct and repeated contact with the gums may cause them to recede.

Effects of smokeless tobacco



### Tips To Quit Or Not Start Smokeless Tobacco

Write Down A List Of Reasons To Quit Or Not Start. For Example:



- Don't want to risk getting cancer.
- Family members find it or may find it offensive.
- Don't like having bad breath after chewing and dipping.
- Don't want stained teeth or no teeth.
- Don't like being addicted or want to become addicted to nicotine.
- Want to start leading a healthier life.

### Follow These Steps Towards Becoming Tobacco Free and Take A Step Towards Having A Healthier Mouth

- Pick a date to quit and throw out all chewing tobacco and snuff.
- Remember daily your decision to stop chewing tobacco.
- Ask friends and family to help you stay committed to the decision to quit, by giving you support and encouragement.
- Find alternatives to smokeless tobacco to chew, such as sugarless gum, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, apple slices, raisins, or dried fruit.
- Engage in recreational activities to keep your mind off smokeless tobacco.
- Develop a personalized plan that works best; set realistic goals and reward your success.



If you need help quitting, or to find out more on the dangers of smokeless tobacco and how to live a tobacco free life, go to <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/tobacco-and-cancer/>

#### Additional References & Resources:

1. Smokeless Tobacco: American Academy of Otolaryngology Head And Neck - <https://www.entnet.org/content/smokeless-tobacco>
2. Deborah M. Winn, Ph.D., Journal of Dental Education; Volume 65, No. 4; Tobacco Use and Oral Disease
3. National Cancer Institute; Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/smokeless-fact-sheet>



See calendar on other side to see what's going on this week

## A Personal Message From Your Health Promotion Health Myth Busting Team



Dear Health Myth Busters,

*I recently joined a baseball recreation league with a few of my friends and while attending the first game, I was offered some chewing tobacco. My friends mentioned it wasn't as bad as smoking cigarettes or as addicting. Is this true? I have always noticed professional baseball players chewing tobacco and seem to be in great shape. So what's the harm if I chew only when I play baseball?*

Sincerely,  
Chew It, Don't Smoke It

Dear Chew It, Don't Smoke It,

Tobacco chew, also known as smokeless tobacco, is assumed to be a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes. Your friends are not the first to make this false assumption. Scientific evidence has shown that smokeless tobacco like chew, dip and snuff are not safer alternatives to smoking cigarettes.

If your friends are regular users of tobacco chew, ask them to show you the area in their mouths where they hold the tobacco. You'll probably see white patches or sores. These ugly white sores (also known as leukoplakia) in the mouth, can turn into cancer. Smokeless tobacco can cause oral health diseases which could lead to cancer of the cheek, tongue and mouth. Smokeless tobacco can also contribute to heart disease and high blood pressure.

Another reason not to pick up the habit of using any form of smokeless tobacco, is how addictive it can be. Chew, like any other tobacco product, is highly addictive because of the amount of nicotine it contains. In fact, smokeless tobacco like chew actually contains more nicotine than cigarettes and as much as 10 times the amount of cancer-causing chemicals. Even if you plan to only chew tobacco at your baseball games, consider the addictive nature that it will have and the health problems that will result from its use.

The best plan to make is not to start at all. Addiction happens quickly, while quitting tobacco might prove to be more difficult. The best decision you can make for your health is to not use any kind of tobacco products. The dangers are evident and not worth the risk. Next time your baseball friends offer you some chew and feel the need to emulate professional players, politely decline and chew on gum or sunflower seeds instead.

Sincerely,  
Health Myth Busters

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you "Bust The Myths!" Send your questions to [usaf.jbsa.afmoa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.jbsa.afmoa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil). Make sure to include in the subject line "Health Myth Buster." For more online health tips visit the Air Force Healthy Living webpage <http://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/HealthyLiving/>



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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday