

# The Mortar & Pestle

Volume 4 Issue 6 (June 2013)

## Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare

### SMOKELESS TOBACCO



#### What is smokeless tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco refers to tobacco products that are used by means other than smoking. There are two forms of smokeless tobacco: **chew** and **snuff**. Chew comes in long strands, shredded, or twisted tobacco leaves. Snuff, more common, is finely ground tobacco. Whether it's snuff or chew, users let the product sit in their mouth between their gum and lip/cheek and suck on the tobacco juices, spitting often to get rid of the saliva that builds up. The nicotine is then absorbed into the bloodstream through the tissues of the mouth.

#### How is smokeless tobacco different from smoking cigarettes?

Many individuals believe smokeless tobacco is safer than smoking cigarettes because the harmful toxins do not enter the lungs. But this is not true and smokeless tobacco use can cause serious health problems. Smokeless tobacco contains **28 different cancer-causing agents** and **nicotine**, which causes users to become addicted. **In fact, the amount of nicotine absorbed in smokeless tobacco is 3-4 times greater than from one cigarette.** This attribute makes **smokeless tobacco more addictive** and more difficult to quit than smoking.

#### Who uses smokeless tobacco?

In Canada, 8% of individuals 15 years and older (112,000 teens between 15-19 years and 268,000 young adults between 20-24 years) have reported trying smokeless tobacco at least once. Use is particularly common among athletes, such as baseball and hockey players. The highest sales of smokeless tobacco across Canada are in **Alberta**.

#### What are the consequences of using smokeless tobacco?

Just like smoking cigarettes, smokeless tobacco is harmful. In fact, no tobacco product is safe. The major consequence of using smokeless tobacco is cancer (such as cancer of the mouth, lips, tongue, cheeks, gums, stomach, esophagus, and bladder) and only 50% of people diagnosed with these cancers survive more than 5 years. Other negative health effects include gum disease, tooth loss, bad breath, mouth sores, yellow teeth, heart disease, and stroke.

#### Tips for quitting

If you or someone you know is using smokeless tobacco, quitting is really the only option to avoid the consequences listed above. **Step 1:** decide to quit. **Step 2:** think of reasons to quit, such as avoiding health problems, setting a good example, or saving money. **Step 3:** build a support team. The more support you have behind your decision, the easier it will be to quit. Your pharmacist should be a key member of your team, as she can help you select products that can aid in quitting. **Step 4:** pick a quit date and write it down. **Step 5:** tell other people about your quit date and get excited about it, and maybe plan a celebration. **Step 6:** QUIT. Quitting won't be easy, but some methods to quit include quitting cold turkey, tapering down the nicotine dose, or using nicotine replacement therapy such as gum, patches, or prescription medications.

Visit [WWW.CANCER.GOV/CANCERTOPICS/TOBACCO/SMOKELESS-TOBACCO](http://WWW.CANCER.GOV/CANCERTOPICS/TOBACCO/SMOKELESS-TOBACCO)

## ORAL HYGIENE

Do you brush and floss your teeth daily? You should! Did you know that maintaining good oral health is important to your overall health? In fact, caring for your teeth and gums is important at all stages of life, especially because older adults and seniors are keeping their natural teeth for longer than ever before.



If you do not maintain good oral health, cavities and gum disease may result and this may contribute to serious conditions such as respiratory diseases, diabetes, infections, and sleeping problems.

If left untreated, gum disease can lead to the loss of teeth or the development of diseases, such as respiratory disease. The bacteria in plaque travel from the mouth to the lungs and can cause an infection or aggravate existing lung conditions. Also, people with diabetes are more susceptible to gum disease and it can put them at greater risk of diabetic complications.



Smoking and use of smokeless tobacco can also lead to serious oral and dental diseases. Tobacco is very harmful to gum and mouth tissue. The toxins can cause oral cancers and damage to the bone around the teeth, which leads to tooth loss.

To maintain good oral health, you should make sure to brush and floss your teeth daily. Visit your dental professional regularly. Eat a healthy diet according to ***Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide***. Do not smoke or use smokeless tobacco products.

## NICOTINE GUM

Nicotine gum, such as **Nicorette Coated Gum®**, is an over-the-counter product that can be purchased at Stafford Pharmacy. This product is used to help people stop smoking and using smokeless tobacco. It provides a source of nicotine that helps to reduce the withdrawal symptoms experienced when quitting.

Nicotine gum may be used regularly by chewing one piece of gum every 1-2 hours or whenever you feel the urge to smoke. It is simple to use this product: chew, park, and chew. Allow the new piece to **soften in your mouth first**, and then **chew** the gum slowly and briefly until you can taste the nicotine or feel tingling in your mouth. **Stop chewing** and **“park”** it between your gum and lip/cheek. After about a minute when the tingling stops start chewing again. Continue to **repeat** this procedure for **30 minutes**. This allows nicotine to be absorbed into the body through the mouth lining, which helps to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Overtime, begin to reduce the amount of nicotine gum used after 2-3 months by either decreasing the chewing time from 30 minutes to 10-15 minutes, decreasing the number of pieces used per day, or substituting with sugarless gum.



If you think nicotine gum may be right for you, ***Speak with one of our pharmacists today.***

### **Volume 4, Issue 6**

**Content/Writer:** Guest writer Amber Mueller and Jaclyn Katelnikoff, Clinical Pharmacist

**Editor:** Pete Christensen, Clinical Pharmacist

**Reviewer:** Igor Shaskin, Clinical Pharmacist/Pharmacy Manager