



## The Nicotine in Chewing Tobacco

The amount of nicotine you get from chew depends on the brand, how much you use, and how long you leave it in. You can get twice as much nicotine from the average chew as from a single cigarette.



## Tooth and Gum Problems

Chew causes changes in your mouth. After years or just a few months, the teeth become stained, and the gums draw back from the teeth. In time, even chewers who get regular dental care can have bone and tooth loss. Also, bad breath develops, and cavities become twice as likely because of the sugar in the tobacco.

## Mouth Cancer

Sixty percent of chewers develop thick white patches, called leukoplakia, on the lining of the mouth. These patches can turn into mouth cancer. Chewers are at 2-4 times higher risk for developing oral cancer than non-chewers.

## Heart Disease

The nicotine in tobacco increases heart rate and blood pressure and tightens blood vessels. This means your heart has to work harder to pump the blood your body needs. Over a long period of time, this may lead to heart disease.

## Some Other Reasons Why People Quit Chewing Tobacco

Chew costs a lot. Also, many chewers want to stop feeling controlled by nicotine. Others are tired of worrying about where to spit: swallowing may be toxic, and spitting around others can be uncomfortable, especially when the spit can (spitter) spills.

### How to check for possible health problems:

A quick self-exam might help identify problems before they get out of hand. The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery suggests you look for the following:

- A sore that bleeds easily and doesn't heal
- A lump or thickening anywhere in the mouth or neck
- Soreness that doesn't go away
- A red or white patch in the mouth that doesn't go away
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, or moving your tongue or jaw

Be sure to see your doctor or dentist if you find any of the above, or if you're uncertain about how chewing may affect your health.

Turn the page for information on how to quit chewing.

## Before You Quit

**Focus on why you're quitting.** Make a list of all your reasons to get off smokeless tobacco (bad breath, cost, loss of control, dental problems, etc.) Write down your main reason to quit. Put it on your mirror, keep it in your wallet, or place it where you can see it during the day.

**Plan how you want to quit.** Here are some ways to do it:

- **Cold Turkey**—Quit all tobacco use at once.
- **Switch and Reduce**—Change to a brand with less nicotine. Then use smaller dips. If you like, add in a non-tobacco product (like mint snuff or another herbal chew). With low-nicotine tobacco, be sure you don't use more chew or leave it in longer.
- **Nicotine Tapering**—Count the number of dips you normally have each day. Cut down and chew on a schedule: For example, if you were chewing 10 times a day, chew just 8 (that's one dip every two hours). Slowly increase the amount of time between dips (try going 2 hours, then 3).
- **Nicotine Replacement & Medication**—With a doctor's okay, use nicotine patches, gum, inhaler, spray, or a medication like Zyban. These aids can help with withdrawal symptoms such as cravings and irritability that come from quitting.

**Set a quit date.** Plan to quit at a time when you have the best chance for success. Select an exact date: if you commit to a date, your chance for success is better. Be realistic: don't plan to quit at a stressful time.

## On Your Quit Day

**Get rid of it all!** Throw away anything that reminds you of chewing, like spit cans, leftover chew, or snuff.

**Avoid triggers.** Situations when you normally dipped will likely bring on cravings. Stay away from them as much as you can.

**Try something new.** Instead of dipping, use sunflower seeds, chewing gum, "herbal snuff," ground mint leaves, and caffeine-free tea bags as alternatives. Also, consider using straws, toothpicks, hard candies, and carrot sticks.

**Be prepared for withdrawal symptoms.** In the first few days, you may feel irritable, hungry, or nervous. You may even have trouble concentrating. Many people have only mild symptoms, and some have none at all. Just remember that withdrawal symptoms are unpleasant but they are temporary and harmless.

## Staying Quit

**Practice new ways of coping.** The more you use them, the more they will become natural.

**Reward yourself every day.** You've earned it!

**Ask for support.** Stay in contact with people who want to help. Even just one phone call a day can make a difference.

**Be aware of your thoughts.** It's common to relapse if you think, "I'll have just one dip." If that thought comes up, replace it with "Chewing is not an option."