



Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week



Smokeless Tobacco Fact or Fiction

Smoking - Activity 5

1. Smokeless Tobacco is a safer option than smoking.
2. "Spit tobacco" is another word for smokeless tobacco.
3. Smokeless tobacco comes in two forms: snuff and chew.
4. The amount of nicotine absorbed in one pinch of "dip" is less than that of the nicotine found in a regular cigarette.
5. Smokeless tobacco contains sand, grit and sweeteners.
6. Smokeless tobacco is a good substitute for people who want to quit or reduce their cigarette smoking.
7. The tobacco industry encourages athletes to use dip or chew by stating that tobacco may improve their game and sharpen their reflexes.
8. Canada currently has a law requiring manufacturers to state nicotine content on smokeless tobacco products.
9. A condition known as leukoplakia is a whitish patch of wrinkled skin that forms in the area where smokeless tobacco is placed in the mouth.
10. Most people who chew smokeless tobacco generally don't want to quit.





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1. **(Fiction)** Smokeless does not mean harmless. The reality is that this form of tobacco is as harmful and addictive as cigarettes. Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco contains chemicals that can be harmful to your health.
2. **(Fact)** Smokeless tobacco is a term used and promoted by the tobacco industry for tobacco products used orally to suggest that they are harmless. To avoid this connotation, the term "spit tobacco" is often used. With smokeless tobacco, tobacco juice and excess saliva builds up in the mouth and must be spit out.
3. **(Fact)** Snuff is a fine, powdered, moist or dry tobacco sold in tins or pouches. It is sometimes sniffed but usually it is "dipped" or placed between the lower lip or cheek and the gum for about thirty minutes. Chew is sold in leaves, as a plug or in a twist or a wad. Users bite off a piece, keep it between their gums and cheek, and chew it periodically for several hours at a time.
4. **(Fiction)** The nicotine in a "dip" is equivalent to 3 to 4 times the amount of nicotine in a regular cigarette. This means that a person who uses eight to 10 dips or chews a day and holds it in his or her mouth for approximately 30 minutes receives the same amount of nicotine as a heavy smoker who smokes between 24 and 40 cigarettes a day.
5. **(Fact)** Tobacco leaves contain gritty materials that wear down the teeth enamel and scratch the soft tissues in the mouth allowing the nicotine and other chemicals to enter the blood stream directly. Flavouring salts which can lead to abnormal blood pressure and sweeteners which promote tooth decay are added to mask the unpleasant taste of tobacco.
6. **(Fiction)** Because the nicotine in smokeless tobacco is absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream through the lining of the mouth or nose, it may be even more addictive than smoking cigarettes. In addition, it contains over 3000 chemicals including 28 known cancer-causing agents. Inside smokeless tobacco you can also find formaldehyde (embalming fluid used in biology class), cadmium (found in car batteries), arsenic (found in rat poison), and cyanide (another poison).
7. **(Fact)** There is no documented proof that "chewing" improves athletic performance. However, athletes are the largest marketing source for smokeless tobacco. In the past, tobacco companies provided free smokeless tobacco (as free advertising) to players. Many athletes reported trying smokeless tobacco out of curiosity or peer pressure from their friends or team mates without knowing how harmful it was. Babe Ruth, arguably the greatest baseball player of all time, died of mouth and throat cancer at age 52 after having used smokeless tobacco during his career. Recently, professional baseball (minor leagues) and junior hockey (Western Hockey League) have banned the use of smokeless tobacco by players, coaches and officials.
8. **(Fiction)** At this time, Canada has no law requiring tobacco manufacturers to state nicotine content on smokeless tobacco products.
9. **(Fact)** Leukoplakia is a result of direct contact with tobacco juice in the mouth. Approximately 5% of diagnosed cases develop into oral cancers. Additional health effects of using smokeless tobacco are receding gums, loss of teeth, decreased sense of taste and smell (which can cause loss of appetite leading to poor nutrition), heart disease (heart attacks, strokes and high blood pressure), and cancer (of the mouth, throat or stomach).
10. **(Fiction)** Several studies have shown that over half of smokeless tobacco users would like to quit. While quitting smokeless tobacco may be challenging, it can be done. Tips for successful quitting include: finding reasons to quit, setting a quit date and planning ahead, enlisting support from family, friends, team mates and coaches, seeking help from a cessation programme or a doctor, and rewarding your efforts with healthy alternatives.

Sources: Saskatchewan Health; AADAC; Prevention Source BC; National Defence, Health Promotion Program/ Défense nationale, Programme de promotion de la santé; www.Tobaccofacts.org; Brown University, Health Education; "Surf the Facts" Section 2.6.