

Smokeless Tobacco: Tips on How To Stop

Why is it hard to quit using smokeless tobacco?

Compared with cigarettes, smokeless tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco) puts more nicotine into your bloodstream. For this and other reasons, people who chew tobacco regularly often say that quitting smokeless tobacco is even harder than quitting cigarette smoking. But many smokeless tobacco users have quit successfully--and so can you. Your family doctor can help you quit.

Why is it important for me to stop using smokeless tobacco?

The use of any tobacco product has both immediate and long-term effects on your health and overall well-being. Smokeless tobacco stains and wears down your teeth, causes your gums to recede and produces mouth sores. Bad breath is a common problem. Over time, the use of smokeless tobacco can cause mouth cancer. Nicotine from smokeless tobacco also raises blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and can make it more likely that you will have a heart attack.

It is important for you to have your own reasons for wanting to stop using smokeless tobacco. In addition to health effects, you may be concerned about saving money, giving up an addictive habit or setting a good example for family members and friends. Write down your reasons for wanting to quit using smokeless tobacco--and keep your list in places where you can see it often during your efforts to stop.

What can I do to get ready to quit using smokeless tobacco?

Set a date to quit--and stick to it. Choose a date 1 to 2 weeks from today. Quitting can be hard, so develop a plan that works for you. Anticipate times when you will want to chew or dip, and plan what you will do instead. Prepare yourself for quitting by recognizing the times when you will want smokeless tobacco the most. Plan to avoid those situations or to have tobacco substitutes with you (such as sunflower seeds or chewing gum). Get rid of all your chewing tobacco or snuff before your quit date. Start cutting down now on the amount you chew or dip to prepare for stopping.

Get support from your family, friends and physician. Even better, have a friend or family member stop chewing or dipping with you. Studies have shown that quitting is more successful with the support of family or friends.

What can I use to replace the smokeless tobacco?

You might think about using nicotine gum or another nicotine replacement product. Nicotine addiction can be tough to overcome. Talk to your physician about whether nicotine replacement is right for you. Generally, people who use three or more tins, or pouches, a week, people who use smokeless tobacco within 30 minutes after they wake

up, and people who usually swallow tobacco juice benefit most from the nicotine replacement.

Find an oral substitute for smokeless tobacco that you enjoy. This may be non-tobacco mint-leaf snuff, sugarless gum or hard candy, beef jerky or sunflower seeds. Don't substitute cigarette smoking for smokeless tobacco. Stop using all tobacco products.

Find activities to do when you want to chew. Many people chew or dip when they are bored. Instead, take a walk or a quick jog, lift weights, take a hot shower to relax--or do any activity you enjoy that will keep your mind off smokeless tobacco.

What if I slip up and start using smokeless tobacco again?

You may slip up and start using smokeless tobacco again. This is normal. Learn from your slip! Think about what you can do to avoid that situation next time. Plan how you can handle things without going back to using smokeless tobacco.

Once you have quit, congratulate yourself. Celebrate beating the habit. You've worked hard! Use the money you would have spent on smokeless tobacco to buy yourself a present or do something that you enjoy.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

Visit familydoctor.org for more useful information on this and many other health-related topics.

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