

Numerous recent news reports cite that use of smokeless tobacco products, including “snus” provides a safer alternative to smoking and also a means of tobacco cessation. The following statements from credible health professionals refute these contentions:



“In the absence of documented scientifically sound, randomized and controlled clinical trials demonstrating safety and effectiveness, it is unwarranted to advocate the use of smokeless tobacco as a smoking cessation technique.” **“Finally, based on current scientific evidence, the Council believes that promotion of smokeless tobacco use for any reason sends an improper public health message.”** *Source: ADA Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations (CAPIR) position paper.*

“I suppose **you could argue that shooting yourself in the leg poses less of a health risk than shooting yourself in the head.** But do we really need to have that discussion?” *Source: Former ADA president, Dr. Greg Chadwick, on harm reduction and smokeless tobacco as a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.*

Consumers should know if these products truly reduce exposure to carcinogens, and experience tells us this information will not be either forthcoming from the companies that manufacture them, or that we need independent verification of claims,” said Peter Shields, MD, professor of Medicine and Oncology at Georgetown University, and director of Cancer Genetics and Epidemiology at the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. *Source: September 2006 press release from Georgetown University announcing the university’s \$17 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to study the safety of alternative tobacco products. Shields is lead scientist for this grant.*

A University of Minnesota study, “Similar Exposure to a Tobacco-Specific Carcinogen in Smokeless Tobacco Users and Cigarette Smokers,” published in *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2007;16(8):1567-72) summarized findings as follows: **“These results show similar exposures to the potent tobacco-specific carcinogen NNK in smokeless tobacco users and smokers. These findings do not support the use of smokes tobacco as a safe substitute for smoking.”**

To learn more about the possible oral health risks and dangers of smokeless tobacco use, or to order the Operation TACTIC program module, DVD or CD-ROM, phone the Ohio Dental Association at (614) 486-2700, email kathyw@oda.org or visit www.oda.org.

“Tobacco users who think it’s safer to dip snuff or chew tobacco than smoke are dead wrong,” researchers say. *Source: U.S. News & World Report article, August 17, 2009, citing a new study from the American Chemical Society.*

Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to cigarettes.”
“Smokeless tobacco does cause cancer.” **“Smokeless tobacco is a known human carcinogen.”** *Source: Former U.S. Surgeon General, Richard H. Carmona, MD, MPH, FACS.*

“That’s not harm reduction, that’s harm creation.” Mitch Zeller, health policy consultant and former director of the office of tobacco programs at the FDA. *Source: New York Times, August 9, 2006.*

“The health community should play no part in helping the [tobacco] industry expand tobacco sales by acknowledging snus as a safer product.” **“We shouldn’t be out there promoting harm ... even reduced harm.”** *Source: USA Today article, “As cigarette sales dip, new products raise concerns”, 08/06/2007, citing Gregory Connolly, director of tobacco control research at Harvard School of Public Health.*

What to know about smokeless tobacco use and tooth decay



Smokeless tobacco use can adversely impact oral health, with the potential to cause tooth and gum decay, bad breath, stained teeth, gum recession and tooth loss. Here's what some well-known national health entities have to say:



American Dental Association, www.ada.org

ADA Dental Minutes

Use of smokeless tobacco can contribute to oral disease, including:

- Plaque and tartar deposits
- Stained teeth
- Gum disease
- Receding tissues
- Tooth decay
- Tooth loss
- Sensitivity to hot and cold foods

American Academy of Periodontology, www.perio.org

What effects can smokeless tobacco have on my oral health?

Smokeless tobacco can irritate your gum tissue, causing periodontal (gum) disease. Sugar is often added to enhance the flavor of smokeless tobacco, increasing the risk for tooth decay. Smokeless tobacco also typically contains sand and grit, which can wear down your teeth.

Other tobacco products are also harmful to your periodontal health. Smokeless tobacco also can cause gums to recede and increase the chance of losing the bone and fibers that hold your teeth in place.

Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov

Tobacco use in any form — cigarette, pipes, and smokeless (spit) tobacco — increases the risk for gum disease, oral and throat cancers, and oral fungal infection (candidiasis). Spit tobacco containing sugar increases the risk of tooth decay. Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/CDNR/>.

National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research, www.nidcr.nih.gov/

If you think a 'chaw' of tobacco won't hurt you, chew on this: Chewing tobacco users are more likely to develop dental caries, particularly on the root surfaces of their teeth, than those who don't use tobacco, say scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A study showed that men who use chewing tobacco exclusively were four times more likely than those who had never used tobacco to have one or more decayed or filled root surface. The more packages of chew a man used each week, the more likely he was to have a decayed or filled root surface. Additionally, the more years a man had used chewing tobacco, the more likely he was to have a decayed or filled root surface.

Oral Health America, NSTEP Smokeless Does Not Mean Harmless program, www.nstep.org

Users can suffer from periodontal (gum) disease, cavities (tooth decay), leukoplakia (white patches and oral lesions which can lead to oral cancer), and are at greater risk for oral, throat, stomach and pancreatic cancer.