

## **Smokeless Tobacco**

**Q: “Is using smokeless tobacco a safer alternative to using cigarettes, cigars, or pipes?”**

**A:** Smokeless tobacco is less lethal than cigarettes, cigars, and pipes but all forms of tobacco use present a health risk. The use of smokeless tobacco is not a safer alternative to traditional tobacco use. Smokeless tobacco should not be seen as an option in the process of quitting tobacco use.

Smokeless tobacco typically comes in two types-snuff and chewing tobacco:

- Snuff is a fine-grain tobacco that often comes in pouches that can be placed between the lower lip and gum. Nicotine is absorbed through the saliva. Snuff is designed to be smoke-free and spit-free. Marketing ads have promoted snuff as a “discrete” way to use tobacco and not be breaking the smoke-free laws.
- Chewing tobacco comes in the form of long strands of loose leaves that are placed between the cheek and gums. Users will suck on the tobacco leaves, absorb the nicotine through the saliva, and spit out the excess tobacco juice.

There are significant health risks that are associated with the use of smokeless tobacco:

- Chronic bad breath
- Discoloration of teeth
- Gum disease and recession
- Tooth decay and tooth loss
- Increased heart rate, irregular heart beats, increased blood pressure
- Leukoplakia, white sores in the mouth that can lead to cancer
- Head and neck cancer
- Cancer of the esophagus, stomach, bladder, and pancreas

Smokeless tobacco products contain the addictive substance nicotine. Smokeless tobacco can produce nicotine levels higher than those seen in smoking tobacco. When attempting to quit using smokeless tobacco it is important to find a healthy substitute for the habit of having something in the mouth. People who are in the process of quitting are encouraged by the improvement of the mouth sores and gum disease once the tobacco is no longer in the mouth. People who are beginning the process of quitting tobacco should seek support to handle the physical and mental challenges that may accompany the withdrawal from nicotine.