



The Dangers of Smokeless Tobacco

Know the physical and mental effects of smokeless tobacco use!

Cancer - Smokeless tobacco contains cancer-causing agents (carcinogens). Cancers are most likely to develop at the site where tobacco is held in the mouth, but it may also include the lips, tongue, cheek, and throat.

What are some early warning signs of oral cancer?

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

Leukoplakia - Smokeless tobacco users may develop a condition in which white spots form on the gums, inside of the cheeks and sometimes on the tongue. It can be caused by the irritation from the tobacco juice. The disorder can be considered pre-cancerous. Therefore, if a white patch does not heal within one week, you should consult a doctor.

Heart disease - The stimulating effects of nicotine, an organic compound made out of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and sometimes oxygen, increase the heart rate and blood pressure and may trigger an irregular heartbeat.

Gum and tooth disease - Smokeless tobacco permanently discolors teeth, causes halitosis (bad breath), and may contribute to tooth loss. Smokeless tobacco contains a lot of sugar which forms an acid that may eat away the tooth enamel, causing cavities and mouth sores. Also, its direct and repeated contact with the gums may cause them to recede.

Social effects - Bad breath, discolored teeth.

The bottom line is that any kind of smokeless tobacco use is extremely harmful to your body. For tips on how to kick the habit, visit the Academy's website at www.entnet.org.