

Smokeless Tobacco - January 2011

The reason I want to write about smokeless tobacco is because its use remains very prevalent among athletes. In fact, the NCAA did a study where they found 30 percent of male soccer players use these products on a regular basis. Although this strays from the topic of nutrition, it is something you put in your mouth, so I consider it fair game. My oldest son plays college baseball, and I am amazed about how many college players use smokeless tobacco products. Most of them do not have a clue concerning the dangers of these types of products. You are getting ready to find out, as you read this article, and be forewarned, the surgical case described at the end of the article is very graphic. Unfortunately, it is also very true.

The term smokeless tobacco refers to dip, snuff, and plugs of chewing tobacco. Many people have the misconception this is not as dangerous as smoking. Needless to say, they are wrong. My job is to provide information to you, so you at the very least will be able to make informed decisions about what you put inside your body.

Here are a few facts to consider, the average first time user is 10 years old. 600,000 women use smokeless tobacco. An estimated 40 percent of baseball players use it. In 2004, 1.7 million cans were sold every day which generated 650 million dollars in revenue for tobacco companies.

There are 2000 chemicals in smokeless tobacco, one of which is nicotine. This is a highly addictive substance that causes high blood pressure and heart disease. There are also 28 carcinogens in the product. These are substances that cause cancer. One substance is nitrosamine, and the other is polonium. Think about this; polonium is also used in the temperature regulating system in the space shuttle. Smokeless tobacco also contains substances called micro abrasives, which produce very tiny cuts or lacerations in the gum tissue. This is done to cause a very fast introduction of the product into your bloodstream.

Health consequences of using these products include gum disease, tooth loss, discoloration, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Smokeless tobacco also causes cancer of the oral cavity which includes the lip, tongue, cheeks, and floor of the mouth. It also can cause cancer in the throat, voice box, and esophagus.

Health data shows there are 30,000 new cases of oral cancer per year causing an average of 5,000 men and 2,500 women to die.

Danger signs include: Leukoplakia (white patch), a sore that does not heal, prolonged sore throat, restricted movement of the tongue or jaws. Pain is usually not present until late.

When I give lectures on this topic, people are stunned to see the operative photographs of these unfortunate patients. Before the discussion, they just didn't realize putting a pinch or two of tobacco in your mouth could produce the devastating oral cancers and disfigurement seen in these patients. Please never use any tobacco products. If you do, you put yourself at a very increased risk to develop diseases that cause pain, suffering, and death. Now, let's go to the Operating Room.

Case History

Mr. R. was a forty-something year old white male I first saw sitting in the waiting room of the surgical clinic. I thought he looked very strange, as it was in the middle of the summer, and he wore a long coat and a scarf that covered most of his face. No one sat next to him, as he was alone in the corner.

Soon, his name was called, and he was placed into an examination room. The first thing I noticed about him was a very foul odor. Now, I know why he sat alone, as no one could tolerate the smell. His scarf, coat, and the rest of his clothing were wet. At this stage, we weren't exactly sure what was going on with him, but soon the answer would be all too clear. He reported a daily use of smokeless tobacco, and he came to the clinic because his family demanded he seek medical attention. No wonder. He told us something was wrong with his face, and this is why he was dressed in a long coat and scarf in the hot, humid Kentucky summer. I tried to remove his scarf, but it was embedded into his skin. The putrid odor was quite remarkable as we kept peeling layers of the scarf from his face. Finally, the last layer of scarf was seen covering a defect in his skin, showing exposed mandible, or jaw bone. The oral cancer, which started in his cheek, had eroded into the skin and we exposed bone and half of his tongue in the open wound. Also, he had maggots in the wound, which were feeding upon dead tissue. The wetness of his clothing was due to the open wound in his cheek, which saturated him with his own saliva. This was the source of the foul odor, as well. It was the most advanced, worst case of oral cancer any of us had ever seen.

We took him to the operating room and had to remove half of his face including part of his tongue, jaw bone, and his cheek. We had to use a flap of tissue from his chest to close the large facial defect, so he would not be leaking saliva any longer. The cancer had spread to the lymph nodes in the neck. Mr. R. was so disfigured from his surgery; his family could barely tolerate looking at him. As a result of the oral cancer caused by the use of smokeless tobacco, Mr. R. died. It was a terrible, tragic case and could have been prevented.

NEVER USE SMOKELESS TOBACCO!

Dr. Steven Snodgrass is a board-certified surgeon, a member of the American Medical Association, a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and Chief Executive Officer of Peak Performance Foods.

Dr. Steve has a special interest in helping athletes and patients meet their special physical and nutritional needs. Realizing nutrition is the foundation, or cornerstone of human health, he created a revolutionary protein snack, Dr. Steve's Pro Bites to provide your body with the nutrition you need to compete. Remember, when you take great care of your body, it will take great care of you, especially during the stress of athletic competition or trying to heal and get well from injury or illness.

For more information write to Dr. Steve at drsteve@insightbb.com Pro Bites are now available at www.probites.com and www.samsclub.com by simply entering Dr. Steve

Please give us a try, and see for yourself. Let our product help you perform at your very best.

Thank you.

Dr. Steve

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