Dear Alice,

What are the effects of using snuff (the kind that you put under your lip)? Can you get cancer within a few months?

? Spitting

Answer

Dear Spitting,

Snuff, a form of smokeless or spit tobacco, is not a safe substitute for cigarettes. Over 30 different carcinogens have been identified in smokeless tobacco products. Long-time snuff users (10+ years) are at an elevated risk of developing head and neck cancers in the mouth, gums, cheek, tongue, pharynx, and throat. Other conditions that may result from using smokeless tobacco include:

- Gum disease and receding gums
- Cavities
- Bone loss around teeth
- Discolored teeth and halitosis (bad breath) [2]
- White sores in the mouth that can lead to cancer (leukoplakia)
- Increased heart rate and high blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Ulcers

List adapted from the American Cancer Society [3]:

Furthermore, regular use of snuff can lead to long-term nicotine dependence. Withdrawal from smokeless tobacco can be very difficult and may include intense cravings, trouble concentrating, headaches, irritability, increased appetite, depressed mood, and trouble sleeping.

While you probably won't have cancer after only a few months of use, seriously consider quitting now before you put yourself at even higher risk of serious health complications. Check out Quitting smokeless tobacco [4] for specific cessation tips. In many states, you can find cessation support and check out the resources offered at your local health department. In
addition, your dentist may also be a good resource for tips on snuffing out this habit once and for all.

Good luck!

Alice!

Category:
Alcohol & Other Drugs [6]
Cigarettes, Chewing Tobacco, & Other Nicotine [6]

Related questions
Quitting smokeless tobacco [7]
Chewing tobacco risks [8]
Quitting smoking = depression? [9]

Resources
Tobacco Cessation (Morningside) [10]

Published date:
Dec 23, 1994
Last reviewed on:
Aug 11, 2014

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/effects-smokeless-tobacco

Links