

▶ **A NEW NICOTINE** - TOBACCO INDUSTRY PROMOTING A DIFFERENT TYPE OF TOBACCO ADDICTION - BY BRUCE ADKINS, DIRECTOR, WV DIVISION OF TOBACCO PREVENTION1,2

News

Division of
WEST VIRGINIA
Tobacco Prevention
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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A New Nicotine

Tobacco Industry Promoting A Different Type of Tobacco Addiction

Snus. Gesundheit!?! No it's not a sound you make when you sneeze. *Orb?* No, it's not a form of text messaging. And there are *sticks and strips*, but these are definitely not candy, (although they do come in mellow and mint flavors).

Snus is a type of moist, ground tobacco for oral use that originated in Sweden. In Swedish, it quite literally means "smokeless tobacco". The industry has test marketed these products here in WV, and independent analysis found highly addictive levels of nicotine in different types of snus. Perhaps it is more important to note that all of the products that were tested contained *Class A* carcinogens.

Sinking to new lows, some of the tobacco companies have test marketed a "melt in your mouth" alternative to cigarettes. These candy-like products have been labeled Sticks, Orbs, Strips, etc. Soon everyone will see these attractively packaged, flavored tobacco products throughout the state.

According to industry specifications, each of these dissolvable substances will typically deliver between 0.6 to 3.1 milligrams (mgs) of nicotine. Cigarette smokers typically inhale

about 1 mg per cigarette, according to various research studies.

Snus most closely resembles chew and spit tobacco. This 'spitless' tobacco comes in a pouch that's placed between the upper lip and gum. Each of the new products are designed to be consumed quickly.



The quick-dissolving, candy-like product types are made of finely milled tobacco and come in *fresh* and *mellow* flavor styles. These products have different longevity cycles: from one to three minutes for the strips, ten to fifteen minutes for the orbs, and twenty to thirty minutes for the sticks.

These products have been designed to hide the fact that they're being used in public settings, while also taking

away some of the 'yuck' factor associated with regular chew and spit tobacco versions; however, the primary ingredient in all of these products is tobacco. Nicotine is a naturally occurring substance found in tobacco, but the tobacco companies are well known for manipulating the levels by adding synthetic, 'super-charged' amounts of it.

Any form of nicotine is highly addictive, and most of the oral versions have higher nicotine levels than the smoking tobacco products. The tobacco industry is believed to be trying to introduce these new 'spitless' products before the passage of a pending Food and Drug Administration regulation, which would call for significant regulation of all

tobacco products.

Indeed, a nicotine addiction is one of the hardest to break, (the tobacco industry thrives on this very fact). One must remember that tobacco manufacturers are really in business to make money. They can ensure this by making sure that people develop and maintain nicotine addiction. In West Virginia alone, they need to recruit four-thousand

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replacement smokers annually- the number of smoking-related deaths each year.

The industry has been historically successful at pushing their poison, because of their ability to spend billions of dollars effectively marketing their products. While all tobacco industry PR spokespeople are well-schooled in saying they “don’t target kids,” they still know that marketing their new products to them with slick ad campaigns can raise initiation and use rates and reduce cessation efforts- thereby sharply increasing the number of addicted tobacco users.

With more smoke-free air regulations being passed, and smoking becoming less and less accepted, the chew and spit tobacco market has started growing.

To stay ahead in the fight, tobacco companies are testing the waters with their new snus and ‘spitless’ products. They are enthusiastically promoting the ability to use these products in places that smoking is no longer allowed- like airplanes, restaurants, buses, and

bars. The industry is even endorsing poly or dual tobacco product use as one strategy to maintain addiction in the face of the increasing acceptance of smoke-free indoor air laws and locally-enforced regulations.

Snus, orbs, sticks, or any other tobacco product will definitely result in serious health consequences to the user. All oral tobacco users increase their risk of developing mouth and gastrointestinal cancers by using these new products. Other effects of oral tobacco use include: mouth lesions, gum disease, gum recession (when the gums pull away from the teeth), and tooth decay.

Like each new tobacco product that is introduced to the public, the industry is suggesting that oral tobacco products are ‘less risky’ alternatives to smoking tobacco.

Nationally accepted guidelines and health care standards developed from both private and public regulatory

agencies are in accord; strong scientific evidence and consensus of the medical community agree: **There is no safe or harmless use for any tobacco product.**

Some will be tempted or fooled by the cute product names, the claimed convenience, or any potential or asserted health benefits; but, the best thing for any tobacco user’s health is to **quit using ALL types of tobacco!** And the logical message for everyone else is to **never start.**

For help in quitting tobacco, all tobacco users should be encouraged to contact their health provider or to call the West Virginia Tobacco Cessation Quitline toll-free at 1-877-966-8784. The West Virginia Division of Tobacco Prevention’s website can be accessed at: www.wvdtb.org.



Free Help To Quit.



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