

**SPITTING THE HABIT**  
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**My husband who is a non-smoker was amazed last year when we got our life insurance policies and he was listed as a smoker, due to the presence of nicotine in his bloodstream. Chewing tobacco contains 4.6 mg of nicotine, compared to 1.8 mg of nicotine in a cigarette. While the risks of cigarettes are well know, I do not think a lot of people who chew realize the health risks associated with it.**

**What physical conditions may occur due to the use of chewing tobacco?**

**Cancer of the mouth and throat, leukoplakia (white sores in the mouth that can lead to cancer), gum recession, bone loss around the teeth, abrasion of teeth, bad breath, cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure.**

**Currently only ½ of all patients diagnosed with oral cancer survive more than 5 years.**

**If you drink alcohol and use tobacco your risks for oral cancer are greatly increased. Prolonged exposure to the sun also increases the risk of lip cancer. Oral cancer is most likely to occur after age 40. Studies indicate a diet high in fruits and vegetables may prevent the development of oral cancer.**

**What signs should I report to my dentist?**

**Mouth cancer starts as a tiny, unnoticed white or red spot or sore anywhere in the mouth, which is why you should have regular checks-ups from your dentist.**

**Other signs include:**

- a sore that bleeds easily or does not heal - a color change of the oral tissues**
- a lump, thickening, rough spot, crust or small eroded area**
- pain, tenderness, or numbness anywhere in the mouth or on the lips**
- difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue**
- a change in the way the teeth fit together**

**To view photos of the effects of chewing tobacco you can go to [www.quit tobacco.com/facts/effects.htm](http://www.quit tobacco.com/facts/effects.htm).**

**How much money are you spending on chewing tobacco?**

**The tobacco habit is expensive. To figure out how much you spend on tobacco multiply the money you spend on tobacco every day by 365, this amount may surprise you. Now multiply this number by the number of years you have used tobacco and this amount may astound you. Multiply the cost per year by 10 and ask yourself what you would rather spend this money on vs. tobacco for the next 10 years.**

**Information from this article was obtained in part from the American Cancer Association at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and the American Dental Association at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).**