



## Why are Cigarettes and Chewing/ Dip Tobacco So Addictive?

by Shannon Chrisman, Tobacco Prevention & Education Coordinator

Have you tried to quit smoking, dip, or chewing more times than you can count? Well, you're not alone! What is the major reason why cigarettes and chew are so difficult for you to give up? It's because of **nicotine**.

Nicotine is the main ingredient in cigarettes and dip/chewing tobacco, and it's the ingredient that keeps you going back for more and more. Did you know that if you took one drop of pure nicotine and placed it on your skin, it would kill you? The amount of nicotine in dip/chew/cigarettes isn't enough to kill you, but they have enough to get you addicted and it's the nicotine that keeps you hooked.

Why is nicotine so addictive? When you smoke, the nicotine at the lit end of your cigarette burns. The burning process changes the nicotine from a solid form into a gaseous form. The gaseous form is extremely potent and it reaches your brain quickly. When you take a puff of your smoke, the gaseous nicotine reaches your brain in about seven seconds. It's the speed of the nicotine gas hitting your brain that makes cigarettes so addictive.

Similarly, chewing tobacco contains high levels of nicotine. In fact, dip and chew contain much, much higher levels of nicotine. Because nicotine levels are so high and because chew and dip are placed in the mouth, it is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and also goes right to the brain. Many people believe that chewing is a better and safer alternative to smoking. **It is not.** It's just as deadly and addictive.

When cigarettes or chew/dip products advertise low nicotine, it's not any less addictive than the higher-nicotine products. All tobacco products have high enough levels of nicotine to cause and sustain addiction.

It's a step in the right direction to cut back on the amount of nicotine in your cigarettes and to choose the products with lower levels of tar and nicotine. Of course, the best choice for you is to cut them out altogether. There's no doubt about it, quitting smoking and chewing is hard. Pat yourself on the back for trying and if you didn't succeed the first time, it's okay. Try again. After all, it can take years of practice to develop the habit; it's going to take practice to undo that habit.

If you need support in quitting, contact the Tobacco Prevention Program at the Siletz Community Health Clinic at 1-800-648-0449 or 541-444-1030.

## Win a \$25 Gift Certificate to Fred Meyer!

There is still time to complete the **Tobacco Prevention & Education Program Survey** that was in the **April 2001** issue of Siletz News. Anyone can complete the survey (non-smokers, smokers, other tobacco users, teen-agers, ex-smokers, young, and old). Your expert opinion is important to us! If you would like another survey sent to you, please call the TPEP at 1-800-648-0449 or 541-444-1030. Thank you for your input!

## Tobacco Facts

Tobacco Prevention & Education Program  
Oregon Quit Line – 1-877-270-STOP

### What are Your Triggers?

Do you sometimes reach for a cigarette because something triggers that craving for you to want a cigarette? The triggers to smoke can be emotional or situational.

#### Emotional Triggers

- ◆ You feel irritable
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ You're angry
- ◆ You are depressed
- ◆ You feel sad
- ◆ You feel guilt
- ◆ You're bored
- ◆ Nervousness

#### Situational Triggers

- ◆ Driving your car
- ◆ Certain friends
- ◆ After completing a project/task
- ◆ You wake up/first thing in the morning
- ◆ After a meal
- ◆ Drinking alcohol
- ◆ Drinking caffeine
- ◆ On a break

These are just examples of some triggers. Try recognizing your own emotional or situational triggers. As you learn to recognize them, try to come up with alternative ways of dealing with those urges. Try catching yourself before you smoke. Instead, go for a walk or do some other activity you enjoy. Write down five or more of your triggers to smoke and for each one, try to list several alternative activities to smoking. By identifying what triggers you to smoke, you can begin to take back control of your own life and quit.

### Special Points of Interest

- ◆ 65 percent of teens do not smoke or use tobacco.
- ◆ Teens do listen to what their parents say.
- ◆ Cigarette consumption is down 22 percent.
- ◆ 75,000 fewer Oregon adults are smoking.
- ◆ In 20 years, a two-pack-a-day ex-smoker could save \$47,500.

### Stress Relievers

1. Take deep breaths.
2. Repeat positive prayers/affirmations.
3. Use your sense of humor. Laugh!
4. Write in a journal.
5. Stretch your body.
6. Go for a walk.
7. Listen to music, sing, or dance.
8. Begin a hobby.
9. Get a good night's sleep.
10. Spend time with your family.
11. Join a gym, exercise.
12. Talk to someone you trust.
13. Make a date with someone special.
14. Meditate, relax.

### Seven Reasons Not to Smoke While Pregnant

1. **You can do it** and you'll live longer.
2. When you quit, your baby quits.
3. Your pregnancy is healthier and easier.
4. Baby is a healthier weight.
5. Your baby will live longer.
6. Your breast milk is chemical-free.
7. You protect your baby from smoke.

