

New forms of smokeless, spitless tobacco put users and children at risk

Tobacco companies are test marketing and debuting new “dissolvable tobacco.” These products are being promoted as an answer for smokers who are unable to smoke due to smoking restrictions in the workplace, at home and in social situations.

Dissolvable tobacco may also be regarded as a way to smoke around children without lighting up or spitting as with other smokeless tobacco products.

Dissolvable tobacco is made from finely milled tobacco, held together with food grade binders. It is designed to be placed in the mouth, on the tongue or between the cheek and gum where it dissolves to release tobacco. The appeal of dissolvable tobacco is further enhanced by the addition of flavors such as wintergreen, mint and java.

While these products are sold in child-resistant packaging, their resemblance to candy and breath mint strips and the likelihood that adults will carry the small packages in their pockets or leave them in other unsecured places, means that children may have easy access to them.

Dissolvable tobacco products contain between 60 to 300% of the nicotine found in one cigarette. Smokers who use these products may get a higher dose of nicotine than they are used to, possibly resulting in adverse reactions such as tremors, nausea, vomiting and agitation. Children who ingest this dose of nicotine typically become pale, shaky and sweaty, and may vomit. Access to pleasant tasting, easy to eat, dissolvable tobacco, however, might encourage children to eat amounts that could result in more serious problems such as slow heart rate and low blood pressure, as well as effects on the brain including seizures and coma.

Another concern is the use of these products by teenagers as a replacement for smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco or snuff). Smokeless tobacco is already heavily used by the youth market, because of its supposed safety versus smoking cigarettes. If sports figures and other admired adults are seen to be using dissolvable tobacco, this could provide the “cool factor” which encourages teens to adopt a habit. The average age of first-time users of smokeless tobacco is 10 years old and nearly 600,000 US females over the age of 12 use chewing tobacco as a weight control aid according to the Oral Cancer Foundation. While tobacco companies say they *will not* market these products to under-age consumers, the appeal to teens is obvious. The product does not look or taste like tobacco, is easy to hide and doesn’t cause tell-tale “smoker’s breath” or odor on clothes.

"It’s so important to not introduce kids to tobacco, as it is a ‘gateway drug,’” says Charlie Williams, M.D. of Anderson Family Health, explaining that, “most ‘hard drug’ abusers will readily tell you that the first drug they ever tried was tobacco.”

If a child does ingest a dissolvable or smokeless tobacco product, call the Indiana Poison Center *immediately* at **1-800-222-1222**, whether or not they have any symptoms. Have the child with you and, if possible, bring the product and its package to the phone. A poison center expert can help you determine how much the child may have eaten and what type of treatment is necessary. If a teen or adult develops symptoms after ingesting a dissolvable tobacco product such as vomiting or shaking, call the Indiana Poison Center immediately (**1-800-222-1222**). If you discover your teen has been using these products and he or she is not having symptoms, react as you would if you discovered your child had been smoking cigarettes. Remember that nicotine is a highly addictive drug. Early intervention can help in avoiding a habit that will only become more difficult to break over time.

More information about the new products can be found on the following Web sites:

[http://tobaccoproducts.org/index.php/Camel_Sticks, Camel Orbs and Camel Strips](http://tobaccoproducts.org/index.php/Camel_Sticks,_Camel_Orbs_and_Camel_Strips)

<http://www.dissolvabletobacco.com/main-w.html>

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-12-23-dissolve_N.htm

<http://www.newsinferno.com/archives/4273>

*The Indiana Poison Center is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and its services are free and confidential. If you do need emergency treatment, the poison center can save you time and money by calling ahead so that the doctors and emergency room are ready for you. **Calling the Poison Center will not delay treatment** and most poisonings can be safely managed at home with the help of the poison center experts. To ask for a free magnet or to learn more about poison safety, call the Indiana Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222**.*