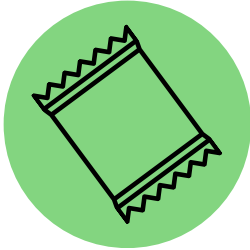


Substances At A Glance: Nicotine Pouches

Despite nicotine's widely known addictive qualities, one in six teens surveyed in a 2024 COMPASS study in Quebec did not know if nicotine pouches were addictive.¹



What are nicotine pouches? Nicotine pouches are small, white pouches that are placed inside the mouth (often behind the lower lip) to allow nicotine to slowly be released and enter the blood stream for up to an hour. They do not contain tobacco, but contain nicotine either extracted from tobacco, or made synthetically in a lab. They can also include plant materials to create the pouch, sodium carbonates to help nicotine enter the gums and flavoring additives.²



Nicotine pouch use among youth: In 2024, approximately 5% of youth age 16-19 in Canada reported using nicotine pouches. Meanwhile, 9% of young adults age 20-29 reported having used nicotine pouches.³



Why do youth use nicotine pouches? Similar to smoking and vaping, young people may use pouches to fit in, manage stress or to get the 'head rush' from using. They may see them as a "safe" alternative for using nicotine without the significant health risks associated with smoking, and can use them without being noticed since they don't create a noticeable smoke or vapor. They are also popular with athletes looking to use a stimulant like nicotine without harming the lungs.⁴



Nicotine Pouches and the law: Health Canada has restricted sales of nicotine pouches to pharmacy only sales for people trying to quit smoking. Regulated nicotine pouches can contain up to 4mg of nicotine per dose,⁴ and can only be flavored with mint/menthol. Packaging for products cannot be colorful or engaging, as this may make the products appear appealing to youth.⁵



Unregulated nicotine pouches: Unauthorized nicotine pouches sold in Canada can be found online, however some have also been reported to Health Canada being sold in convenience stores and gas stations. They may contain as much as 5 times the legal limit of nicotine per dose. They have been reported to contain ingredients not listed on their product label, which can cause unpredictable health problems such as allergic reactions.⁵



Substances At A Glance: Nicotine Pouches

A 2022 US study of nicotine pouch samples found various cancer causing chemicals including ammonia, chromium, formaldehyde and nickel.⁶



Short and long term effects of nicotine pouches: Nicotine can cause the brain to release a high amount of dopamine, causing feelings of alertness, focus, energy and motivation. As nicotine wears off, a person may feel irritable, restless and struggle to concentrate, leading to a cycle of dependency; they use nicotine to lower stress, then feel more stressed when it wears off, causing them to use nicotine again and again.⁷



What are the risks of nicotine pouches? In addition to worsening stress and anxiety, nicotine use during teenage years can also impair learning, memory and concentration. It is also associated with increased blood pressure, hardening of arteries, heart disease and stroke. Long term risks specific to pouches are unknown, but early studies have linked them with tooth decay, gum recession and pre-cancerous patches in the mouth.⁸



How can someone reduce the risks of nicotine pouches? Nicotine pouches are intended to help adults quit smoking, and should only be used for this purpose. Avoid unauthorized products to avoid consuming unknown or unsafe ingredients. Nicotine pouches should never be swallowed; this can cause nicotine poisoning, which can include seizures and respiratory failure. Keep pouches out of reach of children and pets.



How can I talk with my kids about nicotine pouches? Just like talking about smoking, conversations about pouches are very important to have with your pre-teen or teen; the earlier the better. Knowledge about nicotine pouches is new and growing, so stay educated on the topic with your teen. As them open ended questions, monitor their mental health and wellness, discuss healthy coping strategies to manage stress.



Nicotine Pouches & Youth: Despite Federal regulations that prevent authorized retailers from selling to youth under 18 in Canada, nicotine pouches are heavily promoted to youth through unregulated channels. Unauthorized producers will sell pouches in packaging that looks like popular products (like energy drinks or candy) and use additional flavoring additives to entice young people, while social media platforms appear to promote nicotine pouches as a lifestyle choice as opposed to a quit smoking aid.⁹

Reference List

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