



Addictive Smokeless Tobacco Products Targeted During Through With Chew Week

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Despite tobacco companies' efforts to portray smokeless tobacco products as a "safe" alternative to smoking cigarettes, a recent study conducted by cardiologists showed "hard evidence that chewing tobacco harms the heart." Through With Chew Week, Feb. 19 – 25, calls attention to smokeless tobacco use, highlighting the fact that there are no "safe" tobacco products.

"Smokeless tobacco remains a threat to the health and wellness of Oklahomans," said Randy Springfield, spokesperson, Pushmataha Turning Point Coalition. "It is not a safe alternative to cigarettes, and in fact, is even more habit forming because it contains a higher concentration of nicotine than cigarettes."

A study published in the American Journal of Cardiovascular Drugs found that coronary arteries constricted within 10 minutes of using chewing tobacco. The same study also indicated that chewing tobacco can damage genetic material in the liver, kidney and lungs. The study was conducted on subjects while their hearts were being monitored.

Smokeless tobacco is more traditionally associated with oral cancer, especially in the cheeks, gums and throat. The use of smokeless tobacco can also lead to other oral problems, including mouth sores, gum recession, tooth decay, bad breath and discoloration of teeth.

"One of the best ways to reduce tobacco use is to implement tobacco-free policies at schools and in workplaces," said Tracey Strader, executive director, TSET. "Governor Fallin's recent executive order prohibiting tobacco use on all state-owned or leased property is a major step towards creating environments for youth and workers where the healthy choice is the easy choice."

More than 245 Oklahoma school districts have implemented 24/7 no tobacco use policies. In Oklahoma, 12.1 percent of high school students participating in the Youth Tobacco Survey used chewing tobacco, snuff or dip.

This year, smokeless tobacco users are encouraged to quit during Through with Chew Week. Support to quit can come from friends and family as well as from dentists and health care providers.

While many successfully quit on their own, receive services through health insurance or by talking to their doctor, others have contacted the Oklahoma Tobacco Help line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or online at OKhelp-line.com for free coaching on quitting. The Help line is a free program funded by TSET, OSDH and the CDC which provides free quit coaching by phone or online and offers a free two-week starter kit of nicotine patches, gum or lozenges. Nearly 200,000 Oklahomans have used the Oklahoma Tobacco Help line since 2003.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Help line services are available to Oklahomans who smoke as well as those who use other tobacco products. Services are also available in Spanish by calling 1-800-793-1552 or for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing on TTY 1-877-777-6534 or through Videophone at 1-866-748-2436 (ask for direct VP number). For more information about the Oklahoma Tobacco Help line, go to: OKHelpline.com. For more information about quitting tobacco use go to: www.smokefree.gov.

