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Spitless tobacco product contains high levels of nicotine

By Emily Corio



Listen Now (3:19)



November 20, 2008

R. J. Reynolds' Camel Snus is marketed as a more socially acceptable and considerate way to get a nicotine fix, because there's no second hand smoke and no spitting. But public health officials say it's five times stronger than other snus products available in the state.

Camel Snus comes in small pouches. Users place a pouch between their upper lip and gums. Users shouldn't have to spit with snus, because they can swallow the juice. A recent WVU study analyzed what's in snus.

"Of the two brands of snus we had analyzed, the Camel Snus flavors had about 5 mg per gram of nicotine, and that's a reasonably strong amount of nicotine in their product," said Robert Anderson, deputy director of the WVU Prevention Research Center. "The other brand had a much lower amount of nicotine in their snus. They had three flavors. One flavor had about 2 mg per gram of nicotine; the other two flavors had less than half of gram, so quite mild."

When asked about the WVU study, R.J. Reynolds spokesman, David Howard, sites tests that compared Camel Snus to 40 other smokeless products.

"The nicotine content in Camel Snus was actually below the average for the smokeless products that are currently on the market," said Howard.

Addictive qualities aside, Anderson says Camel Snus also contains four cancer causing agents.

"There's no tobacco one can take that doesn't have some risk associated with it," said Anderson. "We have a new faculty member, who's coming to our campus next spring or late winter, and she analyzed chronic snus users in Sweden, and she found that men who used snus over a number of years had twice the risk of getting pancreatic cancer than people who didn't use snus. So, it's by no means a harmless benign product."

This is one area where Howard, with R.J. Reynolds, agrees.

"Camel Snus is a tobacco product, and no tobacco product has been shown to be safe or without risks. We are not making any health claims with this. Again, it is a tobacco product. It is marketed as such. It has age-restricted sales. It carries the same warnings. Anybody who is concerned about their health should quit," said Howard.

Robert Anderson says tobacco companies are not required to warn consumers about the level of nicotine in products, so he hopes his findings deter people from using snus. Anderson's delivering his message this week during the annual nationwide quit smoking event, called The Great American Smoke-out.

"The best course of action to take is to avoid tobacco; ceasing using these products because they're very harmful to health, no matter what form one is taking the tobacco in. And we do know there are some people in our state who are using more than one

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Latest News :**Novembers Gifts**

By Cat Pleska

Writer Cat Pleska asks us to consider the quieter moments the month has to offer in her essay "November's Gifts."

Heating assistance available

By Cecelia Mason

WV will have more money this year to help low income, elderly and disabled families cover their heating bills. In September Congress increased the program's budget. So this winter the state's share will more than doubled to \$45M.

Longest skateboard in Bluefield

By Jessica Lilly

Two artists in Mercer County are scheduled to unveil a 36-ft skateboard this weekend. The artists started the work in July, now they're inviting the public to see the fruits of their labor.

Great American Smokeout(2)

By Clark Davis

Thursday was the 32nd Great American Smokeout, sponsored by the American Cancer Society. One smoker used the day to quit his habit.

Share your Thanksgiving memories

By WV Public Radio staff

Thanksgiving is just a little more than a week away, and it is one of those holidays that evokes strong emotions and memories -- the smell of roasting turkey...the roar of a crowd at a football game...the sight of the season's first snow. We'd like to invite you to share some of your Thanksgiving memories with us here at West Virginia Public Radio.

form of tobacco, and we think this is a good time to stop using all forms of tobacco," said Anderson.

West Virginia has the highest rate of women who smoke while pregnant and the highest rate of men who use smokeless tobacco in the country. WVU is surveying several hundred college students to measure snus use.

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