



Mississippians Urged to Snuff Out Tobacco Use During “Through with Chew” Week

Mississippi tobacco users are urged to “quit spit” as part of this year’s “Through with Chew” week – a national effort to educate the public on the dangers of spit and chew tobacco. “Through with Chew” week is February 20 – 26 with Thursday, February 24 set aside as the “Great American Spit Out” – a day on which spit and chew tobacco users are urged to quit for one day in the hope they will quit for good.

Seven and a half percent of Mississippi adults and more than 16 percent of Mississippi male high school students use some form of spit or chewing tobacco.

Many people mistakenly believe that using spit or chew tobacco is healthier than lighting up. Health officials say this isn’t the case.

According to Dr. Nicholas Mosca, interim director of the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) Office of Oral Health, there are 28 known cancer-causing chemicals in spit tobacco, including formaldehyde, nickel and polonium-210 (a radioactive element). “Using spit tobacco may increase a person’s risk of cancers of the lip, tongue, cheeks, gums and mouth,” said Mosca. “There is also some evidence that spit tobacco may cause cancer in organs other than the mouth.”

Mosca also said spit tobacco products contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. “Some smokeless tobacco products contain additives that increase the rate at which nicotine is absorbed into the body.”

“Through with Chew and the Great American Spit Out is a great time for Mississippians to stop using tobacco,” said Tawni Basden, director of Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalition of Rankin, Scott and Simpson Counties. “Quitting can be difficult, but there is plenty of help available. Mississippians who want to quit can contact the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline at 1-800 QUIT NOW to receive free counseling and medications, such as the nicotine replacement patch or gum,” said Basden.

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. “The best way to protect yourself from oral cancers is to stop using tobacco products immediately,” said Basden.

For more information visit the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline website, www.QuitlineMS.com, or call the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline at 1-800 QUIT NOW.