

Switching to Smokeless Tobacco Cuts Smokers Health Risks

By ACSH Staff — April 30, 2007

[What's the Story? Smokeless Tobacco As Harm Reduction for Smokers \(cover\)](#)

^[1] **New York, NY -- May 1, 2007.** The public health establishment has misled smokers about the benefits and risks of using smokeless tobacco as a method of quitting cigarettes. That's one conclusion of a new pamphlet, [What's the Story? Smokeless Tobacco as Harm Reduction for Smokers](#) ^[1], created by physicians and scientists associated with the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH).

Despite using all the currently approved quitting methods, only a small minority of smokers who try to quit are successful each year. Smokeless tobacco is a little-known and under-utilized means of reducing the overwhelming health risks of smoking. According to ACSH, smokers who can't quit don't realize that although the nicotine in cigarettes is addictive, it is not the constituent of tobacco that causes lung cancer or the many other diseases that afflict smokers. When a smoker switches from using cigarettes to a nicotine source does not involve inhaling the thousands of chemicals in tobacco smoke, the potential health harms are significantly reduced.

Yet most health agencies and anti-smoking activists continue to advise smokers that their only choices are to quit tobacco use completely -- or suffer the serious health consequences. Smokeless tobacco use is rarely even mentioned as a possible harm reduction strategy.

[What's the Story? Smokeless Tobacco as Harm Reduction for Smokers](#) ^[1] describes, in simple and clear language, both traditional and modern smokeless tobacco products and explains the rationale for their use. The fact that there is strong evidence supporting the low health risks of smokeless tobacco, clearly explained in this report, will undoubtedly come as a surprise to many health professionals and laymen alike. The brief "What's the Story" format (based on an earlier, full-length report by ACSH -- see http://www.acsh.org/publications/pubid.1403/pub_detail.asp ^[2]) makes these facts readily accessible.

"Modern smokeless tobacco products are a far cry from the old images of tobacco 'chaws' and unsanitary spittoons," states ACSH president Dr. Elizabeth Whelan. "These products," she continues, "can be used unobtrusively and have been shown to significantly lower the harm associated with smoking tobacco."

Dr. Gilbert Ross, ACSH Medical and Executive Director, added, "The medical establishment must be educated about the potential benefits of smokeless tobacco for the inveterate smoker. The majority of smokers have difficulty quitting tobacco use completely, and current cessation aids are approved for only limited periods of time. Physicians should advise their smoking patients that there are other products available that could be used as satisfactory substitutes, and that might be another method to help them quit tobacco use."

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