

## TOBACCO DANGEROUS AND DEADLY

Tobacco use is the primary cause of *preventable* death in the United States. At least 3000 children and adolescents in the U.S. begin tobacco use every day. Of these, 750 will die of tobacco-related diseases. Although today there are still more smokers than spit tobacco users, the rates of spit tobacco use have shown a dramatic increase.

*The Washington state Department of Health reports that spit tobacco use is increasing among Washington adolescents. One out of five teens believes that “smokeless” spit tobacco is safer than smoking.*

## WHO IS USING SPIT TOBACCO?

In 1990, according to the Centers for Disease Control, 10 million Americans chewed or tucked snuff in their lips. In 1994, the number had risen to 12 million people. Approximately 3 million of them were under 21 years of age. Some Washington dentists have reported seeing use as early as first grade!

## ADOLESCENTS AND TOBACCO

Research indicates that more than 75% of smokers began before age 21. More than 20% started smoking before age 16. The use of *smokeless* spit tobacco, promoted by the tobacco industry as a safe alternative to smoking, is increasing at an alarming rate. Tobacco use by adolescents is related to the use of other chemicals. Because tobacco is considered a *gateway drug*, it is necessary to target early experimentation with tobacco, which typically begins in the sixth or seventh grade.

# CHOOSING TOBACCO, IS IT WORTH THE RISK?

**A 50-minute educational slide and video program to enhance your school's tobacco education curriculum. Presented by member dentists of the Washington State Dental Association who practice in your community.**

Dentists and members of the oral health team are usually the first to see the consequences of tobacco use. They can share important information about the oral health consequences of spit tobacco to support your lesson plans and help youth choose not to use tobacco.

## *Choosing Tobacco. Is it Worth the Risk?*

### **Program elements:**

- color slides
- 2 videos (11 minutes total)
- tabletop displays
- “Mr. Gross Mouth”
- student activity sheets, brochures and posters

**This program has been reviewed by Washington educators and substance abuse counselors who find it effective and age appropriate for students ages 10-17.**

## THIS PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOUTH

- identify why people begin using tobacco;
- discover that non-use of tobacco is normative behavior;
- recognize the covert messages in tobacco advertising;
- be aware of the oral health consequences of spit tobacco use;
- develop their own personal reasons for not using tobacco.

## SCHEDULE YOUR SCHOOL'S CLASSROOM OR ASSEMBLY PROGRAM TODAY

*Choosing Tobacco* is available in a format suitable for classroom or assembly presentation. *There is no charge for presenting this program in your school.* For more information, or to schedule a speaker, contact:

**Renee Knollman**  
Washington Oral Health Foundation  
1-800-448-DENT

*This program is FREE!*

*Choosing Tobacco. Is it Worth the Risk?* is a program of the Washington Oral Health Foundation and is funded by the Washington State Dental Association, and its member dentists.