

Emerging Tobacco & Nicotine Products: Nicotine Pouches



What are Nicotine Pouches?

With cigarette smoking on the decline, tobacco companies have shifted focus to “smokeless” tobacco products, including oral nicotine pouches. The pouches are sometimes referred to as a “lip pillow” or “upper decker” because of where they are placed between the lip and gum, often under the upper lip. Oral nicotine pouches are used similarly to snus – an oral pouch containing shredded tobacco leaf – but unlike snus, they contain a nicotine powder instead of tobacco leaf. They come in several flavors and are available in a variety of different nicotine strengths. There is no need to spit (like with chewing tobacco) and the pouches do not produce odor, smoke or vapor.

Chemicals in Nicotine Pouches

A 2022 study of 44 nicotine pouch products found that 26 of the samples contained cancer-causing chemicals and several other chemicals such as: ammonia, chromium, formaldehyde, nickel, pH adjusters, and nicotine salt. Nicotine salt is a solution that is added to nicotine products to lessen the burn when ingesting the high amount of nicotine in the product. Nicotine pouches contain nicotine which is harmful to young people in any form. Nicotine concentrations differ across oral nicotine pouch brands. For example, in the U.S. ZYN is sold in 3 and 6 mg, Velo is sold in 2, 4, and 7 mg, and On! is sold in 1.5, 2, 3.5, 4, and 8 mg, according to each brand’s website. Altria’s new On! nicotine pouch product, called On! Plus, will offer nicotine strengths of 6, 9, and 12 mg.

Harmful Effects of Nicotine

- Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical.
- Nicotine can cause cardiovascular and respiratory issues.
- In adolescence, nicotine can affect parts of the brain that control learning, mood, memory, attention and impulse.
- Frequent use can lead to nicotine toxicity in children or adults.

Trends in Use

Oral nicotine pouches include brands such as ZYN, On! and Velo. These products have gained popularity in recent years. ZYN is the most popular nicotine pouch brand on the market. The average user consumes ½ can per day or 8-12 nicotine pouches. This is equivalent to about 1 to 3 packs of cigarettes a day depending on the nicotine pouch milligram amount used. Most adults who used nicotine pouches were aged 21-24, but over a quarter of individuals who currently use this product were aged 18-20. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, in 2024, 480,000 youth in the U.S. reported currently using nicotine pouches (doubled from 2021). 73% of young people who have ever used nicotine pouches currently still use them.



Young people who use oral nicotine pouches often concurrently smoke commercial cigarettes. In 2024, 1.8% of middle and high school students reported current nicotine pouch use. Among students who currently used nicotine pouches, 29.3% reported frequent use, and 22.4% reported daily use. Additionally students who reported current nicotine pouch use, 85.6% used a flavored product.

Marketing Tactics

The tobacco industry reaches and targets individuals of all ages through marketing practices like point-of-sale promotion at gas stations & convenience stores, sponsoring events, public billboards & signs, outdoor banners, magazine and television ads. Marketing messaging claims that these nicotine pouches are “intended for individuals aged 21+ to help them quit using traditional tobacco products,” however this is not an FDA-approved quit medication. Some nicotine pouch brands have even tapped into social media to further advertise these products to youth- and this marketing tactic has proven to be quite effective in engaging their target audience of teens. For example, Phillip Morris’s #ZYN reached 700 million views on TikTok alone as of early 2024 with the help of ZYNfluencers – a term coined for social media influencers who promote ZYN.

Laws and Regulations that Affect Zyn

Under the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, new tobacco and nicotine products like Zyn are required to get authorization from FDA before being marketed and sold. Swedish Match, the manufacturer of Zyn and owned by Philip Morris International, has submitted an application to FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products to receive this authorization, but FDA has yet to act on that application.

This means Zyn is currently on the market illegally.

In addition, [certain states and communities have laws](#) that prohibit the sale of some or all flavored tobacco products, which do include Zyn in some cases.

How Can You Help?

- **Educate** by sharing materials from [Lung.org/quit-smoking](https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking)
- **Support** by encouraging tobacco/nicotine users to quit, don’t switch
- **Lead** by implementing Lung Association programs in your school, workplace, or community
- **Encourage** the use of only FDA approved medication plus counseling
- **Take Action** by [reporting a potential tobacco violation](#) of blatant youth-targeted marketing efforts to the FDA compliance team