

TOBACCO

By: Desiree Goetze, M.P.H.

THE DRUG

Nicotine, the main addictive toxin found in tobacco, is a naturally occurring colorless liquid that turns brown when burned and smells like tobacco when exposed to the air. Nicotine is found in all types of tobacco products. It has been identified as a highly addictive substance. In large quantities, it can kill the average person. In smaller doses, 1-2 mg, it can cause serious addiction. Nicotine, among other psychoactive effects, stimulates dopamine production in the brain and causes the user to feel slightly euphoric. The user can then become irritated and have feelings of withdrawal if the level of nicotine is not maintained.

APPEARANCE

Tobacco, from the plant *Nicotinia Tabacum*, is a green broadleaf plant with white flowers. It is grown in large fields or greenhouses all over the world. It is harvested, dried and shredded into the loose brown substance recognized in cigarettes, dip, snuff and pipe tobacco. It is commonly machine rolled and packaged. The curing process can affect the taste and smell of the finished product. Also, cyclical aromatic hydrocarbons are added to give the tobacco a myriad of flavors, especially common in pipe tobacco.

Tobacco products are sold as cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, bidis (flavored cigarettes) and Kreteks (clove cigarettes) and loose leaf tobacco. Common cigarettes contain tobacco and other additives rolled in paper. Most cigars are made up of a single air-cured or dried burley tobacco.

Cigar tobacco leaves are aged and fermented, giving them a different taste and smell those used in cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco, typically chewing tobacco or snuff, is a dip of finely ground tobacco placed between the gum and cheek.

USERS

Tobacco products are used among all demographic populations. Cigarettes are the most common use of tobacco products in our

society, with males (25%) using slightly more than females (21%). Approximately 80% of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18. Peer pressure and curiosity are the major reasons why young people try smoking. Every day, nearly 4,000 young people under the age of 18 try their first cigarette. Nicotine is considered America's "gateway" drug, as it can lead to the use of other drugs. Teenagers who smoke are three times more likely than non-smokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and twenty-two times more likely to use cocaine.

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

Today 46.5 million adults in the United States smoke cigarettes. Indiana has the 5th highest prevalence rate of adult smokers in the United States. According to the Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC), monthly use trends established in the early years (6th – 8th grade) tend to have a similar pattern throughout the remaining school years. In 2003, 6th graders reported a monthly cigarette use rate of 5.1% and subsequent grades reported increased rates for each year to follow. In 2003, the national average was lower than the state average. However, each year Indiana is closing the gap between national and state monthly usage.

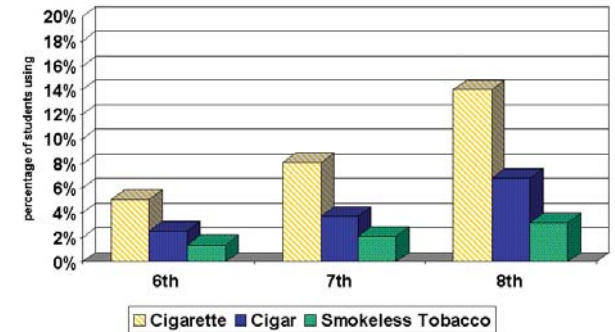
ACQUIRED

Tobacco products are sold legally in the United States to persons over the age of 18. Adults typically purchase tobacco products through retail outlets, tobacco stores, vending machines, and some restaurants and bars. It is illegal for persons under the age of 18 to purchase tobacco products in the United States. Minors can also acquire tobacco products through friends and family members. Tobacco products can be sold individually, in packs, cans, pouches, or in larger quantities such as cartons of cigarettes or boxes of cigars.

EFFECTS

Tobacco use accounts for about one-third of all cancer deaths in the United States and is the single most preventable cause

MONTHLY TOBACCO USE AMONG INDIANA 6TH-8TH GRADERS, 2003



Source: 2003 ATOD Survey, Indiana Prevention Resource Center

of premature deaths. Each year more than 400,000 Americans die from cigarette smoking and one in every five deaths in the U.S. is attributed to cigarette smoking. When a person smokes a cigarette, nicotine and other toxic substances are inhaled into the lungs deposited into the blood stream and within a few seconds reach the brain.

The body defends itself by attempting to expel the nicotine as quickly as possible. The heart begins to beat faster thus increasing blood pressure. Nicotine causes small blood vessels to narrow and circulation to the hands and feet is slowed. The brain receives more oxygen, while other parts of the body such as muscles are receiving less oxygen, and the liver releases more sugar into the blood stream. All of these increases create a "buzz" or temporary energy lift. Around 15 minutes later the smoker may feel calm due in part to the release of carbon monoxide, which is a sedative.

Teenagers who smoke suffer short-term health effects including increased frequency of respiratory illness, asthma, bronchitis, and colds. Short term use of spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores, and bleeding in the mouth. In adults, cigarette smoking causes long-term health effect, such as heart and lung disease, cancers, and strokes.

THE LAW

Indiana law defines "tobacco" as chewing tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco, and snuff that contains tobacco. Violators of the following laws commit a Class C infraction, for which the usual fine is a maximum of \$500.

It is a violation of the law for a person under the age of 18 to purchase tobacco or accept tobacco for personal use. A person

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who knowingly sells or distributes tobacco to a person less than 18 years of age violates the law.

Federal law requires a rotating system of warnings on cigarette, smokeless tobacco, and cigar packaging and advertisement as defined by the federal government.

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