



# COUNTY OF BERGEN

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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## **BERGEN COUNTY EXECUTIVE McNERNEY CAUTIONS RESIDENTS OF THE HEALTH RISKS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO USE**

*BERGEN COUNTY, NJ* — Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney and the Department of Health Services remind residents that the use of smokeless tobacco products (chewing tobacco and snuff) is a significant health risk. These products are not safe alternatives to cigarette smoking and can cause various cancers and noncancerous oral conditions. Smokeless tobacco use can also lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.

“I encourage youth and adults who use smokeless tobacco to try to quit on their own or seek assistance,” said McNerney. “The process of quitting spit tobacco may be as difficult as quitting smoking cigarettes. Both involve tobacco products that contain nicotine, the highly addictive drug found naturally in tobacco, and both involve the physical and psychological dependences of addiction.”

McNerney added that overall, people who dip or chew receive about the same amount of nicotine as regular smokers.

The two main types of smokeless tobacco in the United States are chewing tobacco and snuff. The juice from the smokeless tobacco is absorbed directly through the lining of the mouth. This creates sores and white patches (leukoplakia) in the mouth that can become cancerous. The most serious health effect of spit tobacco is an increased risk of cancer of the mouth and pharynx (throat), larynx (voice box) and esophagus. Oral cancer occurs several times more frequently among snuff dippers compared with non-tobacco users. The risk of cancer of the cheek and gums may increase nearly 50-fold among long-term snuff users. Other effects of smokeless tobacco use include chronic bad breath, stained teeth and fillings, gum disease (recession of the gums), tooth decay, tooth loss, tooth abrasion, and loss of bone in the jaw. Smokeless tobacco may also play a role in cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure because nicotine causes the heart to beat faster and blood pressure to elevate.

Nationally, an estimated 3% of adults, 8% of high school students, and 3% of middle school students, predominately males in the three categories, are smokeless tobacco users. Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

Smokeless tobacco users who need help to “kick the habit” can utilize free quit services provided by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Comprehensive Tobacco Control

Program. N.J. Quitline and Quitnet affords individuals who are ready to quit smokeless tobacco or smoking cigarettes an opportunity to speak with a counselor or log on from their computer to create a personalized cessation plan. Residents can call NJ Quitline at 1-866-NJ-STOPS or 1-866-657-8677 or log on NJ Quitnet at [www.nj.quitnet.com](http://www.nj.quitnet.com).

For more information on the use of smokeless tobacco, call the Bergen County Department of Health Services at 201-634-2707 or log on to [www.bergenhealth.org](http://www.bergenhealth.org).

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