

Smokeless tobacco (dip) can take you out of your game, experts say

Ballplayers and everyone else should steer clear of chewing tobacco

Another baseball season is under way and fans will be heading to the ballpark to watch their favorite players hit home runs, steal bases, and argue over what's fair and foul. Unfortunately, they will also see something else that many consider to be "foul" — players chewing to-

bacco.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) are partnering to spread the word that chewing tobacco, otherwise known as spit, dip, chew, or smokeless tobacco, is not a safe alternative to smoking. In fact, it's very addictive and a serious health risk.

According to a new Massachusetts survey released earlier this spring, teens may be turning away from cigarettes to other forms of tobacco, including smokeless tobacco.

The report was funded by the United States Centers for Disease Control, and was conducted by state education and health departments. The survey asked middle- and high-school students about their tobacco habits and found that for the first time, students are using smokeless tobacco and cigars more than cigarettes.

Of those high schoolers who were surveyed, 16 per-

cent admitted to smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days, while 17.6 percent admitted to using other tobacco products, such as smokeless tobacco.

"Chewing tobacco is the most dangerous form of tobacco because it comes in contact directly with the oral mucosa," states David P. Lustbader, DMD, an MDS Trustee and an oral and maxillofacial surgeon at South Shore Oral Surgery Associates. "Smokeless tobacco is also the hardest form of tobacco to quit, due to its high nicotine content."

More than 30,000 Americans each year are diagnosed with oral cancer. Because it can spread so quickly, only slightly more than half will survive more than five years.

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