



SMOKELESS TOBACCO

Taken **OUT** of the Ballgame in Boston

You may have noticed something a bit different at **Fenway Park** this year. No, it's not that the Red Sox were actually winning more games than they had in the last couple of seasons . . . although that was a nice change. It's that you probably didn't see players openly chewing tobacco, because Boston became the second city in the United States, behind San Francisco, to ban smokeless tobacco at ballparks. The ban, which went into effect in April with the start of the 2016 baseball season, prohibits the use of smokeless tobacco in any of the city's baseball parks and other sports locations.

The impetus behind the new law is that despite a decline in cigarette smoking nationally, the use of smokeless tobacco continues to be popular, especially among younger Americans. A recent report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that high school athletes are using smokeless tobacco products at nearly twice the rate of those who don't play school sports. According to the study, 5.5% of high school students reported chewing tobacco and nearly 2% of middle school students admitted that they use the product.

The use of smokeless tobacco has been associated with oral cancer. According to the Oral Cancer Foundation (OCF), 100 new cases of oral cancer are diagnosed in the United States every day, and every hour one person dies from the disease. Tobacco use is responsible for 75% of oral cancers, according to the OCF.

Furthermore, a survey by the Massachusetts Departments of Public Health and Elementary and Secondary Education found that the use of smokeless tobacco among high school students is higher than the rate of cigarette smoking.

Pain is rarely an early symptom of oral cancer. For this reason, it's important to visit your dentist regularly. Chances for a cure are best if oral cancer is detected early. But you should also pay attention to what's happening in your mouth. The early warning signs of oral cancer include:

- A sore in your mouth that bleeds easily and doesn't heal
- A lump or thickening anywhere in your mouth or neck
- Soreness or swelling that doesn't go away
- A red or white patch that doesn't go away
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, or moving your tongue or jaw

To prevent the risk of oral cancer, it's important to avoid tobacco products in the first place. And since many young people tend to want to emulate baseball players, not seeing them chew tobacco on the field or in the dugout or bullpen is a big first step. So while the Red Sox didn't make it to the World Series this year and David "Big Papi" Ortiz retired from the Red Sox, this means there's still something to cheer about at Fenway Park.