

Nicotine

STREET NAMES: Cigarettes, Chew, Sniff, Nicotine Gum

WHAT IS IT?

Tobacco plant leaves contain nicotine a very poisonous chemical often used as an insecticide. It is a psychoactive drug. This stimulant affects many of the same areas of the brain as cocaine and amphetamines. It is one of the most widely used and destructive drugs in the world today; it directly causes the deaths of more than 3 million people a year, according to the World Health Organization.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOUR BODY?

AT FIRST:

- Heart beats faster. Blood pressure rises.
- Reduced concentration.
- Feel sick to your stomach.
- Feel dizzy.
- Feelings of tension and tiredness are relieved.
- Breath smells bad. Teeth get stained.

OVER TIME:

- Coughing and shortness of breath.
- Lung and heart damage.
- Lung, mouth and throat cancer.
- Stomach ulcers.
- High blood pressure.
- Sense of taste and smell reduced.

TRENDS:

Tobacco is the second most widely used drug in the U.S., after alcohol. As the leading killer in the U.S., tobacco claims over 434,000 lives per year compared to 125,000 alcohol-related deaths and 11,000 deaths attributed to other drugs. According to the American Cancer Society, cigarette smoking is the most preventable cause of death in America. In spite of a variety of measures designed to restrict smoking and discourage young people from starting, smoking has shown signs of a resurgence in the United States, particularly among the younger age groups.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Currently, 61.7 million American adults smoke, which is a decrease of more than 40% since the mid 1960s. However, teen smoking seems headed the other way, with a 31% increase among high school seniors between 1992 and 1997.