### Smokeless Tobacco Users

#### The Facts

- Smokeless tobacco (chew, snuff, SNUS) users start as early as grade 7! The average age of first exposure is 15.
- Most parents don’t know their child uses chew until two years after they started!
- A user of smokeless tobacco consumes about 1-2 tins a week. The cost of a tin is less than $4 from the US and about $20 in Canada. A typical user spends around $1500 a year.
- Chewing tobacco is kept in the mouth for many hours (60 minutes = 8 cigarettes). The high nicotine levels make quitting very difficult.
- Nicotine acts as a stimulant and is addictive.
- Smokeless tobacco use is associated with gum disease and the development of oral cancer. At least 28 chemicals in smokeless tobacco have been found to cause cancer.
- There is NO safe form of tobacco.

#### Where to Get Help

- Quitting is best done in the off-season. Various supports like Champix or nicotine patches are available and have been helpful to some people quitting smokeless tobacco. Do not be confrontational with the youth—they need support to quit. Talk with your dentist, doctor or pharmacist for help.
- Any user MUST see their dentist regularly to check for signs of oral cancer.
If your child participates in sports like baseball, hockey, football, bandy or rugby, the likelihood of trying chew is very high (up to 75% try it). Its use is almost exclusively limited to males.

In hockey and baseball, chew use starts as early as 12. In the over 16 year old teams, about 50% are using it.

Talk to your coaches about it. Even if you keep it out of the locker room it will still be in their mouths!

You should talk to your child about smokeless tobacco. Do it yearly.

Most athletes start using smokeless tobacco because:
• they were bored on a road trip
• it seemed like the thing to do in sport to create a sense of bonding and fitting in
• they succumbed to peer pressure
• many professional athletes chew tobacco and the young athlete may view this as permission

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Chew delivers more nicotine than cigarettes, creating a physical dependency. Once started, it is very difficult to quit. Prevention is the key.

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