Chewing tobacco can affect sugar control in diabetics: a NetWellness column

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
October 21, 2009, 5:45AM

Question: I have a friend who has Type 2 Diabetes. He currently chews tobacco, but is thinking about quitting. He chews 2-3 cans per day. He is interested in knowing the sugar content of the amount he chews. He is not motivated to quit related to cancer, but he may be motivated to quit related to diabetes.

Answer: You raise a question I had never thought of and it turns out to be very interesting and I had to go do some reading. The question is about the sugar content of smokeless tobacco and whether it could have an effect on diabetes control.

Previous Studies

In 1980, two studies were reported in the Journal of the American Dental Association by dental researchers led by Drs Robert Going and Stephen Hsu. They were interested in the sugar content of tobacco in relation to how it might raise the risk of dental cavities.

They found that on average 34 percent of the weight of pouch tobacco is some kind of simple sugar. For plug tobacco, it was 24 percent and for snuff 2 percent. Most of that sugar was either glucose, the form we focus on in the blood...
Sugar in Chewing Tobacco

The range of sugar contents for the pouch tobaccos tested was between 24 and 65 percent and for the plug tobaccos 13 to 50 percent. If your friend is chewing 3 cans per day and each has 1.2 ounces, that is about 100 grams of tobacco per day, and provides on average about 34 gm of sugar, with the range between 13 and 65 grams of sugars per day depending on the brand; in other words, that’s like 3 to 16 teaspoons of granulated sugar per day.

Even without having the specific content for his brand, that is pretty eye-opening. I don’t know whether the addition of sugar to smokeless tobacco has changed since 1980.

Cutting Back

So, to answer your question, it is possible that cutting back on some forms of smokeless tobacco, particularly pouch and plug tobacco, could have a substantial effect on blood sugar control in people with diabetes. The best way to answer the question in an individual is to see what happens to the blood sugar if chewing is discontinued for one or several days.

Whatever the result, however, that should not detract from the really important message: the cancer risk is the overwhelming reason to stop using smokeless or chewing tobacco.
1 trick of a flat belly
Cut down 3 lbs in a week by keeping this 1 weird secret
www.MyAllNaturalWeightLoss.com

What’s Your Credit Score?
The US Average is 694. See Yours in Two Easy Steps for Free.
www.FreeCreditReport.com

Microsoft Sharepoint®
Reliable Collaboration Platform To Simplify & Reduce Costs. Learn More
Microsoft.com/SharePoint

Recommend (0)

Print this Email this Share this:

Previous story: Tests, summits and awards: medical honors and upcoming events for Greater Cleveland

Next story: Swine flu vaccine production behind schedule, federal officials say

Story tags: cancer | chewing tobacco | diabetes | netwellness | robert cohen | university of cincinnati

Comments (1 total) RSS Post a comment

Posted by macksdaddy
October 21, 2009, 7:45AM

Re:Question #1 Dipping tobacco comes in cans or tins...you don’t chew it, you suck and spit. Chewing tobacco is chewed and then you spit. Dipping tobacco tends to have a lot more ingredients added to the blend where regular chew tends to be raw tobacco. Both are disgusting and can cause real problems cancerwise for you mouth and throat.

Inappropriate comment? Alert us.

Reply to this comment | Post a new comment

You must sign in to post a comment.

Sign in to cleveland.com
Username Password Submit Q

Don’t have an account? Register Now!

We’ve upgraded our community features on cleveland.com
Learn more! »
Chewing tobacco can affect sugar control in diabetics: a NetWellness column | Health and...