

# Know the Facts: Oral Nicotine Pouches



Youth vaping and cigarette use are decreasing in Colorado, but a new nicotine product is gaining popularity: oral nicotine pouches. Get the facts on this growing issue.

## What are oral nicotine pouches (ONP)?

Oral nicotine, sometimes referred to as **tobacco-free nicotine pouches**, are products that resemble small white, rectangular tea bags, similar to snus pouches. Unlike snus pouches, which contain shredded tobacco leaves, oral nicotine pouches contain nicotine powder, which could be made from synthetic nicotine or derived from the tobacco plant, along with sweeteners, flavorings, and other chemicals.

These pouches are placed between the upper lip and gums, where nicotine is absorbed through the gums and into the bloodstream. The nicotine amounts per pouch are typically between 4 mg and 8 mg but can vary depending on the manufacturer.

On average, one pack of cigarettes contains about 22 mg of nicotine<sup>1</sup> while one 15-pouch can of 6 mg oral nicotine pouches contains about 90 mg of nicotine.

Between 2019 and 2022, U.S. sales of oral nicotine products increased six-fold.<sup>2</sup>

6x

Growth in sales of oral nicotine products from 2019-2022

## What is Zyn?

Among the several brands of oral nicotine pouches on the market in the United States, Zyn is currently the most popular brand. Owned by Phillip Morris International, Zyn comes in flavors like menthol, wintergreen, coffee, and citrus.

Other brands include On!, Velo, Rogue, and Lucy.



1. (n.d.). Cigs in an E-cig. Stanford Medicine. [https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/take-and-teach/toolkit-factsheets/\\_jcr\\_content/main/panel\\_builder\\_1462615223/panel\\_0/panel\\_builder/panel\\_0/image\\_copy\\_copy.img.full.high.jpg/Cigs-in-a-Pod-V1-R1.jpg](https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/take-and-teach/toolkit-factsheets/_jcr_content/main/panel_builder_1462615223/panel_0/panel_builder/panel_0/image_copy_copy.img.full.high.jpg/Cigs-in-a-Pod-V1-R1.jpg)  
2. Majmundar A, Okitondo C, Xue A, Asare S, Bandi P, Nargis N. Nicotine Pouch Sales Trends in the US by Volume and Nicotine Concentration Levels From 2019 to 2022. JAMA Netw Open. 2022 Nov 1;5(11):e2242235. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.42235. PMID: 36378312; PMCID: PMC9667333.

## ➔ Are these products popular among youth and young adults?

Evidence suggests that these products are gaining popularity among young people. In addition to online “Zynfluencers” – often young people on social media praising the supposed benefits of products like Zyn – these products are seen by many as a discrete way to use nicotine anywhere without producing smoke or vapor clouds.

According to the 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 1.5% of U.S. teens use oral nicotine pouches<sup>3</sup>, up 36% from the prior year. This makes nicotine pouches the fourth most popular nicotine product among youth after e-cigarettes, cigarettes, and cigars.

While the number may seem low, another recent study found that **12% of youth and young adults (ages 15-24) report current use of nicotine pouches** and 16% say they’ve ever used nicotine pouches.<sup>4</sup>

Alarmingly, this study also found that many young people who use nicotine pouches also use other tobacco or nicotine products.

**Among young people who use nicotine pouches, 73% also said they smoke cigarettes and 49% vape.**

## ➔ Are they dangerous?

As with many emerging nicotine products, the long-term health impacts are largely unknown.

However, the research is clear that any nicotine use by young people endangers their health.

Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical that, when used during adolescence, can have long-term effects on attention, learning, and memory.

Evidence suggests oral nicotine pouches can cause mouth sores and contribute to periodontal issues like periodontitis and gingivitis.

## ➔ How are they different from nicotine-replacement products?

Nicotine replacement products, like nicotine patches, lozenges, and gum, are FDA-approved to help individuals quit smoking. The nicotine concentrations in these products, and the way the nicotine is delivered into the body, are designed to help step down nicotine consumption and address cravings.

Products like Zyn and other popular oral nicotine pouch brands are not FDA-approved to help individuals quit and the companies that produce them have not sought any such approval.

### Helping Youth Quit

Young people in Colorado, ages 12-17, who are addicted to nicotine from e-cigarettes, cigarettes, or oral nicotine pouches can receive free, confidential support to quit. To get help, text “Start” to 36072 or visit [mylifemyquit.org](https://mylifemyquit.org).

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3. Birdsey J, Cornelius M, Jamal A, et al. Tobacco Product Use Among U.S. Middle and High School Students – National Youth Tobacco Survey, 2023. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2023;72:1173–1182. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7244a1>.

4. Patel M, Kierstead EC, Kreslake J, Schillo BA. Patterns of oral nicotine pouch use among U.S. adolescents and young adults. Prev Med Rep. 2023 May 12;34:102239. doi: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2023.102239. PMID: 37228836; PMCID: PMC10203764.

5. ibid

6. Ye, D., & Rahman, I. (2023). Emerging Oral Nicotine Products and Periodontal Diseases. International journal of dentistry, 2023, 9437475. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/9437475>