

Advice for schools on nicotine pouches

Recent survey data suggests that nicotine pouch use is increasing with 5.4% of adults in 2024 having ever tried nicotine pouches, which is double the figure for 2020.¹ Among young people (aged 11-18), 3.3% are estimated to have ever tried nicotine pouches with around 1.2% currently using them.

Although nicotine pouch use among young people is reported to be low from the latest surveys, they are a fast-growing product on the UK market and anecdotal reports suggest their use is increasing. Hampshire County Council's Public Health team have developed this information and advice sheet, which you can use within your guidance, policies and for information to parents and pupils.

What are nicotine pouches?

Nicotine pouches are small sachets (that resemble mini tea bags), that are placed between the lip and the gum. They are filled with a white powder infused with nicotine, and other ingredients such as sweeteners and flavourings.

They are typically held in the mouth for between 15-60 minutes and are then discarded after use. Nicotine within the pouch enters the bloodstream through the soft tissue lining of the mouth. As they do not produce a vapour, they can often go unnoticed.

Nicotine pouches are often marketed via social media platforms like TikTok, and at music festivals and events. They are also being used by professional footballers which can increase the appeal to young people.

The most common brands include Zyn, Lyft, Skruf, Nordic Spirit and Velo. You may also hear nicotine pouches referred to as 'upper deckies', 'lip pillows', 'nicopods' and often mistakenly referred to as Snus.



¹ Prevalence of Nicotine Pouch Use Among Youth and Adults in Great Britain – Analysis of Cross-Sectional, Nationally Representative Surveys | Nicotine & Tobacco Research | Oxford Academic

What is the difference between nicotine pouches and Snus?

Nicotine pouches are commonly confused with, or mistakenly referred to, as Snus. Like nicotine pouches, Snus is placed in the mouth and has a similar appearance, however, there are key differences:

Nicotine pouches	Snus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not contain tobacco.• Not covered by tobacco or e-cigarette regulations, they are covered by general consumer product safety regulations.• Can be sold legally within the UK and are not age restricted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contains loose tobacco.• Long history of use in Scandinavia.• The sale of Snus is banned across the EU and UK since 1992, only Sweden is exempt from the EU-wide ban.• Despite this it is not illegal to use Tobacco based Snus if over the age of 18.

How are nicotine pouches regulated within the UK?

Nicotine pouches can be sold legally within the UK but are not covered by tobacco or e-cigarette regulations (Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016), and they are also not licensed as a medicinal product so are not regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (2020).

They are covered by General Product Safety Regulations (2005) as a consumer product, meaning they are **not age-restricted** and do not have the same restrictions on advertising and retail displays as tobacco and cigarettes (although, many brands are adding 18+ to their packaging).

Due to the **lack of stringent regulation**, there has been **extensive promotion** of products at youth-oriented events and venues. This has likely led to the **disproportionate rise in usage among younger individuals**.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill proposes stronger regulation of nicotine pouches, which should help to reduce use in individuals who would otherwise not have used any nicotine, and young people.

Are nicotine pouches harmful?

There is currently limited evidence on the long-term health effects of nicotine pouch use. However, whilst they do not contain tobacco, they are not risk-free. ²

Pouches typically contain nicotine strengths of 2mg to as high as 30mg per pouch. However, because they are largely unregulated, some are sold with much higher nicotine strengths.

Exposure to high strengths has been reported to **cause immediate short-term reactions** including nausea, dizziness, sickness, feeling faint and abdominal cramps. You may hear these symptoms referred to as 'nic-sick'.

Nicotine is also a **highly addictive** substance, which can affect the developing brain. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to the addictive effects of nicotine and withdrawal from nicotine can bring some unpleasant side effects such as thirst, nausea, and headaches.

Advice for schools on nicotine pouches

The NHS does not currently recommend nicotine pouches as a primary stop-smoking aid due to a lack of research on their effectiveness for this use. Hampshire County Council's Public Health team do not recommend the use of nicotine pouches, given the lack of evidence on their long-term harms, their lack of regulation, and impact of nicotine on the adolescent brain.

We would recommend educating young people on nicotine pouches and facilitating open and honest conversations. We also recommend providing parents with information so that they can support conversations with young people. If a young person is found to be using nicotine pouches, we would advocate for a supportive approach, exploring the reasons for use and recommending support to quit.

If a young person would like support with quitting using nicotine products, they can be referred to and receive support from Smokefree Hampshire. They offer free, expert support for anyone over the age of 12 who lives, works, attends school or is registered with a GP in Hampshire. They can accept professional referrals or self-referrals via their website, via phone **0800 772 3649** or by texting **QUIT to 80011**. Please visit **www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk** for further information.

Useful resources

- Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Wales, have developed resources including a lesson plan and presentation designed for KS3 aged young people: **The Truth About Nicotine Pouches KS3 - Action on Smoking and Health**
- Findings from the ASH survey (2022) on nicotine pouch use: **Awareness and use of nicotine pouches**
- Support to quit in Hampshire: **www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk**

² Beyond smoking: Risk assessment of nicotine in pouches - ScienceDirect