

Snus

I must admit it was a new one for me when our police school liaison officer mentioned “snus” last month. It was not a word I had heard before but, they explained, it is something they are keen to educate schools and safeguarding leads about as it represents another concerning new trend among young people following on from the rise in the use of disposable vapes. Many schools will no doubt already be aware of it, not least those that have seen instances of **severe nicotine sickness** in students, which have resulted in warnings to parents.

For those who are unaware though, here are five things to know about snus.

1. What is snus?

Traditionally, snus refers to a form of moist smokeless tobacco widely used in Scandinavian countries, where it is placed between the lip and gum. Modern snus includes tobacco-free nicotine pouches, which deliver the same addictive substance without the traditional tobacco base. These pouches are discreet, odourless and often resemble chewing gum or mints, making them harder to spot than vapes. They are particularly appealing to students looking for a concealed way to consume nicotine during school hours.

2. Why is it dangerous?

Despite the absence of tobacco in some snus products, the nicotine content can be alarmingly high. Some pouches contain double or triple the nicotine of a pack of cigarettes. The risks include dizziness, nausea, gum irritation, receding gums and an increased likelihood of addiction. Prolonged use can lead to significant oral health issues, such as gum disease and tooth loss. Some studies have seen evidence of negative consequences for the **developing brain**. For students already vulnerable to peer pressure, the risk of addiction can spiral quickly.

3. The legal status of snus

The legal landscape around snus is not straightforward. Traditional tobacco-based snus has been illegal to sell in the UK since 1992, but tobacco-free pouches exploit a regulatory loophole. These products are not subject to the same age restrictions as cigarettes or vapes, meaning they can be legally sold to minors. Efforts are under way to address this gap, with proposals to ban the sale of nicotine pouches to under-18s. However, for now, school leaders must remain vigilant as these products are easily accessible online and in high-street shops.

4. Celebrities and marketing

The normalisation of snus among celebrities and **athletes** has amplified its popularity among young people. High-profile footballers have been spotted using nicotine pouches, and TikTok influencers often promote the products under the guise of sharing personal habits. This visibility lends an air of glamour and acceptability to snus, making it appear harmless or even aspirational. Furthermore, snus products are marketed with bright, playful packaging and sweet, fruity flavours that mimic those of popular confectionery.

5. What can schools do?

Combatting the rise of snus requires a multi-faceted approach. First, schools need to educate staff and parents about the product and its risks. Additionally, implementing policies that treat snus as seriously as other forms of nicotine use, including vaping and smoking, is essential. Vigilant supervision during breaks, and clear consequences for possession or use on school premises, can reinforce the message. Engaging with students directly is also vital. Assemblies or workshops focusing on the dangers of nicotine addiction and the tactics used by manufacturers to attract young consumers can help to highlight the long-term health risks and the manipulative marketing strategies of the tobacco and nicotine industries. Schools might also consider collaborating with local authorities and health services to provide resources for those already using snus, ensuring they have access to support when quitting. As snus gains in popularity, it is important that schools, parents and communities work together to address this growing issue and shine a light on a form of nicotine use that has gone under the radar while attention focuses on the danger of vapes.

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