



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, please [click here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#) »

October 20, 1981
SCIENCE WATCH

SCIENCE WATCH; The Smokeless Alternative

Those who find it difficult to give up cigarettes may at least be able to switch to a safer alternative. Instead of inhaling the noxious vapors into their lungs, they can satisfy their craving for nicotine by sniffing powdered tobacco.

This conclusion was reported by four British specialists in addiction and poisons research in the Sept. 26 issue of the British Medical Journal. In a preliminary study they had shown that a single pinch of snuff taken by an experienced snuffer produced blood nicotine concentrations comparable to those resulting from cigarette smoking. Now they have confirmed their findings by measuring blood concentrations of nicotine and its metabolite, cotinine, in 27 volunteers.

Novice and occasional snuffers absorbed little nicotine through the nasal mucosa. But daily snuffers reached blood nicotine concentrations similar to those of heavy smokers.

Unlike tobacco smoke, snuff is free of tar and harmful gases such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides. Since it is not inhaled into the lungs, it does not cause lung cancer, bronchitis and emphysema. It may slightly increase the risk of cancer of the nose and throat in England. And in the United States, where the predominant form of use is "snuff dipping," in which the finely ground tobacco is placed between the gums and lower lip, it may cause some oral cancer.

But on balance, the researchers say, snuffing is "an acceptable and relatively harmless substitute."

[Copyright 2015 The New York Times Company](#) | [Home](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [XML](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#)
| [Back to Top](#)