



Tobacco Facts for Alaska Natives

Alaska Native Cultures and Tobacco Use:

In many cultures tobacco has become culturally and socially accepted, and is sometimes used as a rite of passage. For many Alaska Natives, tobacco use is tied to traditional activities, such as hunting, berry picking and fishing. However, tobacco was first introduced to Alaska Native people by western traders and does not serve a ceremonial, religious or medicinal function in traditional Alaska Native culture.

Use of Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco:

- Alaska Native adults and youth are more than twice as likely as non-Native adults and youth to smoke cigarettes.
- Alaska Native adults are more likely to use smokeless tobacco than non-Native adults (16% vs. 3%).
- Almost half (47%) of Alaska Native smokeless tobacco users are using tobacco in the form of Iqmik or Blackbull, an Alaska-specific smokeless tobacco variant. Iqmik is a homemade form of smokeless tobacco, primarily used in the Southwest region of Alaska.
- Although Iqmik may seem more natural, it is not safer than commercial tobacco products.

How Tobacco Affects Your Health:

- Tobacco use causes more deaths each year in Alaska than suicide, motor vehicle crashes, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, homicide, and HIV/AIDS combined.
- Tobacco use causes illness and disease. In addition to cancer and heart disease, tobacco can cause asthma, reduced fertility and respiratory infections like pneumonia.
- Using tobacco while pregnant increases the risk for having birth complications.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke puts babies at a higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Exposure to secondhand smoke increases nonsmokers' risk of lung cancer, respiratory problems and heart disease.



“ Help us end tobacco use so Alaska Native people can be the healthiest people in the world. Help support healthy choices through screening, education and referral. Educate everyone, including children about the dangers of tobacco use. Refer to programs that work. ”

— Andy Teuber, Chairman and President, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Tips to Help You Quit

Why Should I Quit?

- Tobacco is not part of traditional Alaska Native cultures.
- Chew and iqmik are harmful and cause cancer and other health issues, just like cigarettes.
- The best thing a tobacco user can do to improve their health and extend their lives is to quit.
- Quitting will set a positive example for children, who are at risk to start using tobacco, and other family and friends who already use tobacco.

How Do I Quit?

- Call Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line! The quit line is FREE for all Alaskans. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Quit line services include phone coaching sessions and free nicotine replacement therapy.
- Get support from friends and family. Ask Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line to send you the *Ally Guide*.
- Contact your healthcare provider to find the help you need to quit.
- Keep trying to quit! Most tobacco users make several quit attempts before staying quit for good.

“ I really think this program has been so wonderful. The patches were great and everyone who called was so helpful. I think this has really made a big difference in my quitting for good this time. **”**

— Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line Caller



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IT'S FREE. IT'S CONFIDENTIAL. AND IT WORKS.

For more information, visit alaskaquitline.com