

Nicotine pouches



Nicotine pouches, often referred to as nicopods, are a new and concerning trend. Awareness and use isn't high – a [2022 ASH survey](#) of over 13,000 adults found that nearly half weren't aware of them, less than 4 per cent said that they had ever tried them, and fewer than 1 per cent claimed to be current users – but significantly higher in under 35s, and growing: there was a 10 per cent rise in those who had heard of nicotine pouches between 2020 and 2022.

Nicotine pouches are small parcels that fit under the lip and dissolve, releasing nicotine into the saliva from where it gets absorbed into the bloodstream and makes its way to the brain. They are often considered similar to snus, an oral smokeless tobacco product popular in Sweden (but illegal in the UK), but nicotine pouches are tobacco-free. While they appear similar in nature to nicotine replacement therapy products such as nicotine gums and lozenges, it is worth bearing in mind that these are licensed medicines supported by a body of evidence for their effectiveness in helping people quit smoking, which nicotine pouches are not and do not have.

Brands include Lyft, Skruf, Nordic Spirit, Velo and Zyn, available in a range of flavours such as mint, citrus, fruit and cola, and different strengths from 0 to 20mg nicotine, in compact and attractive packaging. Promotional messages often include claims about not staining teeth, cost-effectiveness compared to other nicotine and tobacco products, and how discreet they are to use given their absence of second-hand smoke.

Research is scant, with [no long-term data](#) supporting the use of nicotine pouches to stop smoking. There is evidence of potential harms however, with [one study](#) into the ingredients finding that 26 of 46 products contained cancer-causing chemicals known as tobacco-specific nitrosamines, and raising concerns about poor labelling to the point of it being impossible to tell how much nicotine was in many of the nicotine pouches involved in the research. [Regulation is minimal](#), particularly compared to medicines, tobacco products or even vapes (which in the UK are subject to stricter laws than many other places in the world). While some brands have introduced their own restrictions on age of sale, and warnings on packaging, this is voluntary.

An additional concern is that these products contain the psychoactive and addictive substance nicotine, with the potential for dependence higher still in adolescents.