

# NICOTINE POUCHES

## FACT SHEET

- In July 2023 Health Canada approved the sale of nicotine pouches (e.g. Zonnic), a product-manufactured by Imperial Canada Ltd., under the Natural Health Product Regulations, Food and Drugs Act.
- Nicotine pouches fall outside Federal and Provincial tobacco control laws as nicotine pouches are approved under the Natural Health Product Regulations. These Regulations do not have a minimum age of sale for nicotine pouches; however, it is specified that they **should not be used by individuals under the age of 18**.
- Health Canada strongly advises retailers to sell nicotine pouches only to individuals aged 18+, to protect youth from nicotine addiction.
- **Nicotine pouches are authorized only to help adults quit smoking**. They should not be used recreationally, **by people under the age of 18**, or by others at risk of nicotine's health effects.
- Zonnic is the only nicotine pouch that Health Canada has authorized for sale in Canada. ZYN and other products have NOT been authorized in Canada.
- In August 2024 Health Canada introduced new measures for nicotine pouches through a Ministerial Order, due to growing concerns that the popularity of nicotine pouches was leading to recreational use, particularly by youth under the age of 18. The new measures ban nicotine pouches from being sold in convenience stores and gas stations. Nicotine pouches can only be purchased at pharmacies, and they must be kept behind the pharmacy counter.
- Nicotine pouches (e.g. Zonnic) are small, discrete pouches that users typically place between their gum and cheek, allowing the nicotine to be absorbed without inhaling smoke or vapor.
- Nicotine pouches work by releasing nicotine through the lining of the mouth, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream.
- Zonnic is sold in packs of 24-pouches, with each pouch containing 4 mg of nicotine. In comparison, a pack of 20 cigarettes delivers approximately 22-36 mg of nicotine. Therefore, the total nicotine content in a 24-pack of Zonnic, amounts to 96 mg, which is significantly more than a pack of cigarettes.
- However, not all 4 mg in a pouch is absorbed either. Studies estimate that 20-50% of the nicotine in pouches is actually absorbed, depending on how long the pouch is used and individual factors (saliva pH, mucosal contact, etc.). That means per pouch, about 1–2 mg of nicotine may be absorbed—comparable to a cigarette.
- Mint or menthol are the only flavors available as Health Canada banned all other flavors in 2024.



- As part of the new measures that were introduced by Health Canada, advertising, promotion, and packaging that could be appealing to youth is prohibited. Packaging is also required to have a nicotine addiction warning, as well as a clear indication of the intended use as a smoking cessation aid for adults.

### Health Considerations:

- **Nicotine is harmful to youth.** It is highly toxic and addictive and interferes with brain development, induces anxiety, and affects memory, concentration, mood, and impulse control.
- Prolonged use of nicotine pouches can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence, making it challenging to quit. Nicotine dependence can lead to use of tobacco products.
- Excessive amounts of nicotine can cause acute poisoning. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, stomach upset, fatigue, headache dizziness, cold sweats, weakness blurred vision, mental confusion, irregular heartbeat, palpitations, and chest pain.
- Nicotine can increase heart rate and blood pressure.
- Continuous use may lead to gum irritation, gum disease, and tooth enamel damage due to nicotine's contact with oral tissues.

### Appeal to Youth:

- Nicotine pouch flavors and the “hidden” use of pouches in the mouth may attract youth.
- Nicotine pouches are promoted as “smoke-free,” “odorless,” and “socially acceptable,” appealing to youth who are concerned about the stigma of smoking or vaping.
- Marketing campaigns often emphasize convenience, freedom from ash and smoke, and the ability to use pouches discreetly in various settings.
- As of February 28, 2025, nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) cannot have branding, graphics, or flavor descriptors that may appeal to youth, and can no longer be sold by retailers, other than pharmacies. The new measures aim to reduce the risk of unintended use and protect youth from the harmful effects of nicotine.

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### What you can do:

- Educate youth about nicotine risks and promote healthy alternatives (exercise, chewing gum, enjoying a healthy snack, etc.)
- Only use authorized nicotine pouches as directed
- **Keep nicotine products out of the reach of children and teens**

### Resources and Supports:

1. Youth and Young Adult Vaping: Quit Your Way Guide: The *Quit Your Way* program is an 8-week support resource for youth and young adults (15–24) who want to quit tobacco or vaping. Designed for delivery by an adult facilitator in schools, it can also be adapted for community settings. School staff play a key role in supporting students to quit by creating a safe space,



building coping skills, and connecting youth to resources. Integrating the program into schools helps promote wellness and offers structured, supportive guidance to students ready to quit.

2. Health Canada: Information available on the effects of nicotine on children and teens, and preventing children and teens from smoking and vaping
  - Risks of vaping - Canada.ca
  - Preventing kids and teens from smoking and vaping - Canada.ca
3. PEI Smoking Cessation Program: Support to help you quit smoking or vaping  
Email: [quitsmoking@gov.pe.ca](mailto:quitsmoking@gov.pe.ca)  
Phone: 902-368-4319  
[www.princeedwardisland.ca/quitsmoking](http://www.princeedwardisland.ca/quitsmoking)
4. Smokers' Helpline: Free and personalized tools and services to help you quit successfully  
Call: 1-866-366-3667  
Text: "iQuit" to 123456  
<https://smokershelpline.ca>

**References:**

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Government du Canada. (2023, September 11). *Government of Canada*. Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/preventing-kids-teens.html>

Government of Canada, H. C. (2024, March 20). *Recalls and safety alerts*. Canada.ca. [https://recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en/alert-recall/only-use-authorized-nicotine-pouches-directed-and-do-not-use-unauthorized-nicotine?utm\\_source=gc-notify&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=en&utm\\_campaign=hc-sc-rsa-22-23](https://recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en/alert-recall/only-use-authorized-nicotine-pouches-directed-and-do-not-use-unauthorized-nicotine?utm_source=gc-notify&utm_medium=email&utm_content=en&utm_campaign=hc-sc-rsa-22-23)

NL Health Services. (n.d.). Flavoured Nicotine Pouches: Fact Sheet. Newfoundland and Labrador.

