

What: News brief, AAP News

Smokeless tobacco: Young boys play dangerous game

by Stefanie Dell'Aringa

Pediatricians and health advocates need to drive home the message to children as early as first grade that smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to cigarettes, experts advise.

"I've talked to a 6-year-old boy who used it regularly," said Cheryl Bressler, a member of the Society of Otorhinolaryngology/Head and Neck Nurses, a national organization educating young people about the dangers of smokeless tobacco use. "Now I target elementary and middle school children."

Particularly at risk are white adolescent males who pick up the habit because they may want to emulate their favorite baseball stars, according to a 1990 study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In doing so, they are unaware of the potential dangers to their health and the fact that smokeless tobacco produces larger amounts of cancer-causing chemicals than cigarettes.

