



*Manufacturers give scant regard for regulations and market highly carcinogenic items (File Photo)*



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*A study of 39 such products on city's streets shows high presence of chemicals*

A study of smokeless tobacco products available in the city shows a great variation in the amount of nicotine, which is the main chemical responsible for dependency on and repeated use of tobacco products. Around 39 smokeless tobacco products purchased from three street markets in Mumbai were analysed for the study whose results have been published in the latest issue of the Journal of Tobacco Regulatory Science.

The level of nicotine varies as much as 11 times in different smokeless tobacco products. The amount of free nicotine varies up to a whopping 300 times.

"The findings show that it is possible for manufacturers to make smokeless tobacco products less hazardous but they continue to market highly carcinogenic and addictive products," said Dr PC Gupta, Director, Healis, and co-author of the paper.

Mawa, popular in Maharashtra and available with vendors, showed a very high presence of lethal cancer-causing chemicals.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, anti-tobacco crusader and surgical oncologist from the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) said, "The results show that most manufactured products have alarmingly high levels of carcinogens and addictive chemicals, much more than natural tobacco. This proves that the products undergo some chemical processing which renders them as lethal."

Tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNA), the most potent cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco, varied more than 650 times in different products.

The study was conducted in a laboratory at the University of Minnesota, USA, in collaboration with Healis-Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health, Navi Mumbai. Dr PC Gupta said that the report strongly highlights the total absence of regulatory standards for the maximum limit of the constituents in smokeless tobacco products.