

Information about the Serbian Smoking Reduction/Cessation Trial (2SRT)

Would you like to participate in a scientific study aiming to help cigarette smokers to reduce or quit smoking? This document explains the background and rationale for the trial and what it would entail should you decide to participate. The study is an international collaboration with researchers in Sweden and the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna, Austria. The study is done under strict control by institutions approved in the Republic of Serbia.

Smoking endangers your health!

Smoking has been classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the world's most significant health problems. In Serbia c. 15,000 people die prematurely each year because of diseases caused by smoking: various types of cancer (e.g. in the lung, oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, urinary bladder, and pancreas), cardiovascular disease (e.g. myocardial infarction), and chronic lung diseases. If you stop smoking these risks are significantly diminished.

Have you tried to stop smoking?

Many smokers have tried to stop smoking – or decrease their cigarette consumption – but have failed. The problem is that smoking is addictive because tobacco contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance. In low doses nicotine acts like a stimulant, like caffeine. But long-term use is detrimental to your health.

There is help!

Most smokers who quit are able to do so on their own. For those who fail, there are pharmaceutical products that may help, for example, nicotine chewing gum or nicotine patches. The problem with these products is that their delivery of nicotine is much slower than with cigarettes. In Sweden, a traditional oral, smokeless tobacco product called “snus” has been an effective alternative for smokers who want to quit cigarettes.

What is “snus”?

Snus is a traditional Swedish smokeless tobacco product that comes in small sachets (or pouches) that are placed in the mouth between the upper gingiva and cheek. The sachet is typically retained in the mouth up to 30-60 minutes. One sachet of traditional snus delivers about the same amount of nicotine as one cigarette. Some brands are flavored with e.g. liquorice or eucalyptus. One reason that snus has been used successfully by many smokers who want to quit is that the delivery of nicotine from snus resembles that with smoking. In Sweden snus has to a large part replaced smoking, particularly among males. As a consequence, Swedish males now have record low risks of smoking related disease. Many Swedish women now also switch from cigarettes to snus. The proportion of female snus users today in Sweden is about 5%. A preliminary study in Belgrade in 2005 indicated that both Serbian female and male smokers found the use of snus quite acceptable.

What does it entail to participate?

If you decide to participate you will receive snus products free of charge for the duration of the study period. The aim trial is to assess the efficacy of snus to help you reduce – or ideally completely quit – smoking. The study extends over a period of 24 to 48 weeks. Here is a description of what the study entails:

At your first visit to the clinic it will be determined if you are eligible to participate. You should be aged between 20 and 65 years, have smoked daily for more than 1 year and smoke on average

more than 10 cigarettes per day. You should be motivated to reduce your smoking, with the ultimate aim of eventually quitting altogether. You should be in good general health. You will be asked about your smoking habits and medical history. Your height and weight will be noted and your blood pressure and lung function will be tested. Blood tests will be made of blood lipids and other markers of risk of smoking-related disease (total amount of blood drawn will be small, less than 80-100 ml). We will also measure the amount of carbon monoxide (CO) in exhaled air. Smokers have invariably increased levels of CO compared to non-smokers so it is a good marker of your smoking habits. At selected centers, participants will also be asked to provide samples of buccal cells. These will be obtained by gently brushing the inside of your cheek with a tooth brush. All these tests are done to determine the presence of findings related to your smoking, and how quickly any such smoking-related findings will normalize should you be able to substantially reduce or quit smoking. All samples and test results will be treated confidentially. Once the study is completed, all remaining samples will be destroyed.

You will be given snus products of two different sizes (1.0 g and 0.5 g sachets) and two different flavors (liquorice and eucalyptus) that you can test to determine which you prefer. Two substantially different types of snus will be used in the study: traditional tobacco-based snus and a more modern type of snus that does not contain tobacco or nicotine. Half of the participants will receive the traditional product and half the modern type. Which type of product you will receive will be determined by the study secretariat using a special statistical technique called randomization. Neither you nor any of the staff responsible for the study (including the responsible physician) will know which type of product you are selected for. This technique is necessary to allow an unbiased scientific evaluation of the efficacy of the two types of products. The physical appearance of the snus sachets, the flavoring etc. is the same irrespective of the type of product. **It is therefore vitally important that you only use products delivered specifically to you that are labeled with your individual identifiers.**

When the trial is finished, you will have the possibility to receive information about which type of product you were allocated to.

Over the next 24-48 weeks you will be asked to return for follow-up visits at the clinic on a total of 9 occasions, at first with short intervals (the first return visit is scheduled after 2 weeks) but later on with longer intervals. These visits will include blood tests at four occasions, measurements of carbon monoxide in exhaled air and a simple lung function test. We will also contact you by mail or telephone to monitor your progress and to inform you about test results.

During the first 24 weeks of the study the aim is for you to reduce the number of cigarettes smoked per day as much as possible with the help of the snus products. If you feel an urge to smoke you should instead try a snus sachet for at least 20-30 minutes to relieve the urge. If you still want to smoke after 30 minutes you can do so (but then remove the snus sachet to avoid nicotine overdose). You will be asked to record in a simple diary each week the average number of cigarettes smoked per day and number snus sachets consumed. Those participants who cannot substantially reduce their smoking will not be followed beyond 24 weeks. Those that have succeeded in substantially reducing their smoking at the 24 week follow-up visit will be encouraged to quit smoking completely, and will be followed for the entire 48-week study period.

Study participation is entirely voluntary and you can decide to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without giving any specific reason. You may also decide at any time to withdraw your consent to have your blood, other tissue samples, and test results

Are there any benefits or risks to participate in the study?

If you can substantially reduce your smoking, or preferably quit smoking completely, as a result of this study, this will have a substantial beneficial impact on your health and will significantly diminish your future risks of smoking-related disease. Participation also entails tests of your general health which may be beneficial.

The nicotine in traditional snus can result in a temporary slight increase in pulse rate and blood pressure, just as cigarettes. However, use of snus during a limited period for the purpose of smoking reduction/cessation is not associated with adverse health effects. Several large, epidemiological studies from Sweden have shown that the health risk profile of long-term snus use (many decades) is close to that of no tobacco use, and it is generally agreed that snus is associated with vastly less health risks than cigarettes.

All data collected on the participants in this trial will be treated confidentially. Results will only be published on a group level which means that data that are specific to you will not be revealed.

All participants in the study are covered by insurance in the unlikely event that you are harmed in any way by the study procedures.

Will I be compensated for participating in the study?

You will not receive any financial compensation for participating in the trial.

Where will the study take place?

The study will be carried out at four centres in the Belgrade area. Your center is

The study has been approved by theResearch Ethics Committee. The trial is funded by Swedish Match AB, Stockholm, Sweden.

Sincerely yours,

Responsible clinician at study center
Address, other contact details

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby declare that I have received written and oral information about the 2SRT-trial, and what it entails. I consent to be a participant in the trial. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I can, at any time, cancel my participation without having to specify any reason.

All data collected on me will be treated confidentially by the staff involved in the trial. Results from the trial are intended to be published in scientific journals but always on a group level which means that data specific to me will not be disclosed.

I consent to donate my blood samples as a gift to the research team to be used for research related to monitoring of effects of smoking and smoking reduction/cessation. Some of that research may be carried out in countries within the European Union. All samples will be handled confidentially and results that are specific to me will not be disclosed. These provisions also concerns samples of buccal cells that participants at selected center will be asked to donate.

I give my consent to having my trial data reviewed by relevant authorities, such as, the research ethics committee, national or international regulatory authorities or other relevant bodies, should such review be considered necessary. At such reviews my identity will not be revealed to any external individuals.

Date

Participant signature

Date

Investigator signature