TREND TALK

# Nicotine Pouches

## *What Are They Doing to Your Brain?*

Nicotine pouches like **Zyn**, **On!**, and **Velo** have surged in popularity, especially among young adults, as a "cleaner," smoke-free alternative to vaping or tobacco. Marketed as sleek and discreet, these tiny pouches sit under your lip and deliver a quick hit of nicotine... but how do they impact your brain?

Let's explore what science says and why it matters for your mental clarity, focus, and long-term brain health.

### What's Inside a Nicotine Pouch?

Nicotine pouches are tobacco-free, but that doesn't mean they're risk-free. Most contain:

- Synthetic or derived nicotine
- pH modifiers and sweeteners
- Flavorings (mint, citrus, cinnamon, etc.)
- Stabilizers and fillers

The appeal? No smoke, no smell, no spit. But the real concern lies in how nicotine, even in pouch form, changes the brain.

### How Nicotine Affects the Brain

Nicotine is a psychoactive stimulant that crosses the blood-brain barrier within seconds. It affects the brain by doing the following:

#### Triggers Dopamine "Hits"

Nicotine causes a spike in dopamine–the brain's reward chemical leading to feelings of pleasure, energy, or calm. But over time, this creates tolerance and dependency.

#### Disrupts Natural Neurotransmitter Balance

With repeated use, your brain reduces its own dopamine production, making it harder to feel motivated or happy without a nicotine boost.

#### Impedes Attention and Memory

While some users feel initial sharpened focus, long-term use has been linked to:

- Difficulty concentrating without nicotine
- Shortened attention span
- Impaired working memory and cognitive flexibility

### Alters Brain Development
*Especially In Youth*

If you're under 25, your brain is still maturing. Nicotine use at this stage can lead to:

- Structural changes in the prefrontal cortex (decision-making, impulse control)
- Increased risk of addiction to other substances
- Mood instability, anxiety, and sleep disruption

### Should You Be Worried?

Nicotine pouches might be less harmful than cigarettes, but they're far from harmless–especially for brain health. Dependency can sneak up quickly.

### Brain-Friendly Alternatives

Looking for healthier ways to boost your brain power? Try out the following:

- Movement breaks: Get up, stretch, walk
- Hydration + snacks: Dehydration = brain fog
- Cold exposure (splash cold water or try cold showers)
- Deep breathing or mindfulness for focus resets
- Nootropic foods: Blueberries, walnuts, matcha, leafy greens

**The bottom line?**
Less Nicotine = Better Brain Performance Over Time

References
CDC: Smoking and Tobacco Use
NIDA: Tobacco, Nicotine, and E-Cigarettes Research Report