Facts about Betel Nut Chewing

Krys Moore NP
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
Dental Health Workshop

Today:

- Welcome
- Betel Information
- Health risks
- Problems in mouth
- Questions
Betel Information

**Betel + Nut**

Betel leaves come from a piper vine. The leaves are used to wrap the mixture of crushed nuts and lime paste with tobacco.
Areca Nut

- Areca Nut grows

- Harvested as:

- Sold as:
Common Names

Betel nut or quid, Areca nut = English

That Tha or Kun Ja = Myanmar (Burma) (Karen - sgaw)

Supadi = Nepalese

Supari = Hindi, Bengali

Mak or Mahk or ar2m = Thai

Pinlang, Pinang = China & Sarawak

India:
- Paan, Paan-Gutkha
- Paan masala (dry form, no tobacco)
- Gutkha
- Kwai (wet variety of betel-nut)

Catechu is the dye used from boiling Areca bark in water
Past

Northern Thailand
Burma (Myanmar)
India

- As long as 9,000 years ago
Betel use today

- Betel products are used by 200-400 million people around the world
- 100g of “Betel Nut” can be purchased from on-line sellers for around $3.00
- Increased use in North America, United Kingdom, Europe and Australia
- Canada, areca nut products are banned by the FDA, but still can be found in Toronto shops.
Why chew?

“Makes me feel good!”

“fresh breath!”

“No cavities!”

Beauty tip – rosy red lips!

“aphrodisiac”

“to destress”

“Man, it gives me energy!”

“wakes me up”

“No more worms!”
Cultural Significance

Use of areca nut is strongly interwoven into local art & craft, folklore, social customs, religious practices and cultural rituals.

- The areca-nut is ‘hot’ and the betel leaf ‘cool’, they act together to keep the human body in balance.

- Betel quids and rice are typical offerings used to honour and propitiate the spirits of deceased ancestors.
Recipe for Betel Nut Quid

- **Step 1** - The leaf of the Piper betel pepper plant is delicately and evenly daubed with the lime paste.

- **Step 2** - With a nut cutter the Areca catechu nut is cut in small pieces.
Step 3

- Pieces are placed in a small wooden mortar, with flavouring ingredients:
  - cardamom, coriander, clove, nutmeg, licorice, peppermint, grated coconut, fennel seed, sugar syrup
  - Tobacco is often added

- then crushed all together into a coarse powder
Step 4

This coarse powder is then placed into the lime daubed leaf and wrapped tightly into a small mouth fitting bundle.
How often?

- Wad is put between teeth & cheek to allow for chewing and sucking until used up
  - red-coloured saliva

- Users may chew from 4 to 15 quids a day

- With each quid being chewed for about 15 minutes
Betel is used.....

- Sense of well-being
- Stimulant – to be more alert - like drinking coffee, alcohol or smoking cigarettes
- Eye problem called Glaucoma
- Mouth – beauty & reduces phlegm
- Digestion – helps appetite, expels gas, kills parasites, purification
- Kindles PASSION

*BUT...*
After the feeling goes....

- Tired
- Low mood
- Need another one to feel good again
Tooth & Gum diseases

Cancer
- Mouth, throat, stomach, liver, lung, prostate & woman’s womb

Chronic diseases
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- High blood pressure
- Asthma is worse
- Gutkha syndrome

Hurts baby in Mom’s womb

Addiction

Health Risks
Many!!!!
Periodontal disease

- Leukoplakia & ulceration - left lateral tongue

- Sub-mucous fibrosis within buccal soft tissues
Oral Cancer

- Group 1 human carcinogen
- Betel leaf contains a known carcinogen named Safrole.
- The lime in the betel quid enhances the extraction of the areca nut alkaloids by salivary degradation and promotes carcinogenesis.
- Mutagenic (36, 40, 41, 42)

18 yr old girl with oral cancer

Well differentiated squamous cell carcinoma
Gutka Syndrome

- Young to middle-aged persons
- Developed within 5-10 yrs of chewing
  - Loss of face & cheek fat
  - Stiffening jaw muscles – can’t open mouth to eat
  - Bulging eye
  - Thinning of the skin
Pregnant or breastfeeding?
Don’t use !!!!

- Documented adverse reactions, including **teratogenic** (abnormal baby) and **fetotoxic** (baby can die) effects.
- **neonatal withdrawal syndrome**.
Affects the brain

Some persons will feel:
- mood swings
- anxiety
- irritability
- loss of concentration
- sleep disturbance
- craving
- Areca nut psychosis
  - in heavy users following sudden stopping
“Betelmania”

- No warning when buy
- low cost
- easy availability
- attractive packaging,
- aggressive marketing,
- This has given rise to a new generation of users who are innocent adolescents and youth.
THANK YOU

Lets keep our teeth “white”!!!!

www.accessalliance.ca/betel