

---

## **Truth Initiative’s EX Program Launches First Campaign to Include Nicotine Pouches as Gen Z Faces Troubling Rise in Use of Multiple Products**

*New Outsmart Nicotine ads, which also include cigarettes and e-cigarettes, highlight the cycle of stress, cravings and nicotine addiction, and direct to free quitting support*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 8, 2026)** – Truth Initiative today launched a national campaign highlighting the troubling rise of young people using multiple tobacco or nicotine products at the same time, including e-cigarettes, cigarettes and — for the first time — oral nicotine pouches like Zyn. Gen Z is navigating a nicotine landscape marked by the wide availability of a variety of addictive products with a high nicotine content. The national [Outsmart Nicotine](#) campaign confronts changing patterns of nicotine use among young people head on and connects them to free quitting support through [EX Program](#), the organization’s free, evidence-based program. In addition to including nicotine pouches, it also marks the first time in nearly a decade that Truth Initiative has featured cigarette use in a national media campaign, a move that speaks to the continued glamorization of smoking in popular culture and usage rates among certain demographics.

“From vapes to nicotine pouches to cigarettes, Gen Z is at the center of a growing number of products designed to keep them hooked and put them at risk for a lifetime of nicotine addiction,” said Kathy Crosby, CEO and president of Truth Initiative. “The fact that more and more young people are using multiple products is deeply concerning. High nicotine levels and ease of use can not only intensify the risk of young people’s dependence, but also make it extremely challenging to quit. Breaking this cycle is critical as nicotine is often one of the first substances used by young people, and may open them up to using other substances and riskier behaviors in the future.”

### **New ads reflect troubling nicotine marketplace and use patterns**

The campaign’s new creative reflects the concerning patterns of nicotine use among young people, including increasingly common use of more than one product. According to a recent Truth Initiative [report](#), more than 45% of youth and nearly 53% of young adults who report past-month e-cigarette use also report using at least one additional tobacco product, such as cigarettes, cigars or nicotine pouches. The vast majority of e-cigarette and pouch products on the market also lack authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), making their presence on the market illegal.



Nicotine pouches, including Zyn, VELO and On!, are [one of the fastest growing nicotine product categories](#), with sales nearly tripling from \$145 million to \$404 million between January 2023 and December 2024. Federal data show about 2% of middle and high school students reported current pouch use in 2024 — trends that should be closely monitored. [Research from Truth Initiative](#) also found that viral “Zynfluencer” content on TikTok may be linked to rising pouch sales, raising concerns that youth-oriented social media could drive interest in these products. In response to the rise in nicotine pouch use and growing demand for quit resources, EX Program recently launched tailored support for people looking to quit nicotine pouches. This was a meaningful clinical undertaking because pouch use has its own distinct patterns of dependence, behavioral triggers and coping strategies.

In addition to the rise of dual and poly-use of products and the introduction of nicotine pouches in recent years, cigarettes have been seen more prominently in culture and phrases like “drunk cigs don’t count” — popularized by outlets like Barstool Sports — continue to circulate online with related social media hashtags generating tens of thousands of impressions each month. Among the new ads is “Drive Thru,” which shows a young person turning to cigarettes to cope with the stress of the workday. Additionally, despite overall declines in cigarette use, persistent disparities remain among certain racial, economic, geographic, and LGBTQ+ communities, highlighting the urgent need for accessible cessation resources.

### **Breaking the cycle of nicotine addiction**

The expansion of the Outsmart Nicotine campaign introduces three new ads — “[Drive Thru](#),” “[Study Sesh](#),” and “[Crush](#)” — that showcase how nicotine use can become a cycle of addiction that is tied to everyday stressors like school, work, social life and family pressures. “Study Sesh,” in particular, portrays a student juggling academic pressure and nicotine cravings, becoming the campaign’s first-ever effort to show and address dual use of e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches.

Research from Truth Initiative shows that an overwhelming [majority](#) of young people who use nicotine started in an effort to reduce feelings of stress, despite scientific evidence to the contrary. While nicotine may feel like a quick fix for stress or anxiety, those effects are short lived and can quickly lead to cravings and withdrawal that keep people using more. Over time, this cycle can deepen nicotine dependence and worsen feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress. Quitting can alleviate these symptoms and lead to long-term improved mental health.



“Outsmart Nicotine helps young people understand how nicotine addiction works and connects them with the tools and support they need to quit,” added Crosby. “The latest ads highlight how stress, cravings and nicotine addiction can keep people hooked, helping young people who use nicotine recognize the impact of it while giving non-users clear reasons not to start.”

### **Connecting young people with quitting support**

Ensuring young people have access to effective quitting resources is critical as many who use nicotine say they want to live free from addiction. A recent Truth Initiative [survey](#) found that 67% of young adult nicotine users plan to quit nicotine in 2026, with most citing physical and mental health as their top motivations.

Building on that momentum, Outsmart Nicotine directs young people to EX Program, Truth Initiative’s free digital quitting platform developed in collaboration with Mayo Clinic. The program connects young people with tools that can help them quit, including personalized quit plans, text message support, community resources, and expert guidance. EX Program has shown it can increase the odds of quitting by up to 40%. On average, between 2,000 and 3,000 young people ages 13 to 24 enroll in EX Program each week. To date, nearly 1 million young people ages 13 to 24 have joined EX Program on their journey to quit nicotine, a milestone that underscores the role effective and accessible support can play in helping young people live free of nicotine.

First launched in 2024, the [Outsmart Nicotine](#) campaign challenges the narrative that quitting is something young people have to do on their own. By pairing science-backed solutions with creative storytelling, the campaign normalizes quitting as a shared challenge rather than a solitary struggle. It’s paired with a Quit Collective of creators who share their own quitting journeys to create a supportive community and inspire others to take the first step toward freedom from nicotine.

Outsmart Nicotine creative was developed by Mojo Supermarket with SixTwentySix. Associated media buying was done by Initiative. The new ads will appear across digital, streaming and social platforms nationwide.

To learn more about how to outsmart nicotine or get help quitting, visit [exprogram.com](https://exprogram.com).

### **About Truth Initiative**



---

Truth Initiative® is a national nonprofit public health organization committed to a future free from lifelong addiction, fostering healthier lives and a more resilient nation. Our mission is to prevent youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empower quitting for all. Through our evidence-based, market-leading cessation intervention, [EX® Program](#), and national public education campaigns, we lead the fight against youth and young adult tobacco use. Learn more at [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).

### **About EX Program**

EX® Program is a proven-effective tobacco cessation program, developed by Truth Initiative® with Mayo Clinic, that brings together the best evidence-based quitting approaches, interactive digital quitting programs, and the most established online quit community. EX Program has helped millions of youth and adults develop the skills and confidence on their journey to quit nicotine. Truth Initiative research has shown that EX Program text messages can increase the odds of quitting by up to 40%. To learn more, visit [exprogram.com](http://exprogram.com).

###