

## What is Betel Nut?

Betel nut, or the areca nut, is the seed of an areca palm that grows in tropical parts of the Pacific, Asia and eastern Africa. It is chewed, usually in combination with other substances like tobacco, and is said to have both stimulant and relaxation effects. The practice of chewing betel nut is often passed down in families and is a part of the social culture.



## Tobacco and Betel Nut

In some cultures the betel nut is combined with tobacco to chew (as well as a betel leaf and the mineral lime). This increases its addictive properties and its health risks. The risks for certain cancers greatly increase when mixed with tobacco.

## Is Betel Nut a Problem in the US?

Yes! Betel nut is common in the US among immigrant populations. In Vermont, its popularity is growing among immigrants who bring the practice from their home culture.

## What can you do?

The best thing you can do for your health is quit. If you know someone who chews betel nut and tobacco, talk to them about the dangers and refer them to the 802Quits website and Quitline.

## Multiple health Risks

Betel nut may be marketed as a cure of indigestion or taken for mild pain-killing effects, but it has other far more dangerous effects on your health.

These include certain cancers, tooth damage, and risk to babies if chewed during pregnancy.

- Betel nut and tobacco can cause precancerous lesions (wounds) in the mouth. These can appear as red or white patches in the mouth or throat.
- Betel nut and tobacco can cause cancers.
  - Oral cancer – Cancer in the lip, mouth, tongue and pharynx
  - Cancer of the esophagus (throat)
  - Stomach cancer
- When combined, Betel nut and tobacco increase the risk of pregnancy problems
- Betel nut and tobacco can cause tooth damage, staining teeth black or even causing them to fall out.
- Betel nut and tobacco can cause nicotine addiction, one of the hardest addictions to quit.

**Visit [802Quits.org](http://802Quits.org) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW  
(784-8669) for free quit coaching and support.**