



**Julie  
Croteau**

**ON DIP AND CHEW**

# Julie Croteau

## BASEBALL; COLORADO SILVER BULLETS STARTER; FIRST FEMALE PLAYER IN VIRGINIA BASEBALL LEAGUE

I grew up on baseball, playing since I was five. For as long as I can remember, chewing and spitting tobacco was part of the game. It used to be part of the culture of baseball. That was before we found out how dangerous it was.

When I was 13 years old, I was the only girl still playing baseball in my town. All the girls I used to play with on Little League had left the game. It was a challenge to keep up with the boys. Part of that challenge was keeping up a tough, cool image.

I would see most of the older players chewing and spitting tobacco. I thought that it was really gross! So when the guys first started pressuring me to join in—I could easily say no.

34 By 16, it was harder to say no to the constant pressure to try chewing tobacco. At that age there were only two of us left who hadn't tried chewing tobacco. I was trying so hard to act tough and serious about baseball. I thought, "How bad could it be—all the other guys were doing it." There must have been something special to it. We finally gave in.

**"IT USED TO BE A PART OF THE CULTURE OF BASEBALL. THAT WAS BEFORE WE FOUND OUT HOW DANGEROUS IT [IS]."**

It was disgusting. It tasted like tangy dirt! I felt dizzy. It sure didn't make me feel good like I thought it would. But I put up a front. The other guy was not so lucky—he threw up. Then the whole team made fun of him—calling him a "loser." I did not want to risk that harassment—I wanted to be "cool," so I tried it a couple more times.

The last time I tried it before a game, I became dizzy, light-headed and uncoordinated. I also had a terrible game. I went 0 for 4. I was already at a disadvantage—many of the guys were bigger and stronger than me. I didn't need another obstacle. So I told my teammates that my parents would kill me if they found about the chewing tobacco.

A couple of years later, I learned how really bad it could really be.

A coach showed me the big hole in his lip from chewing tobacco. That was definitely not cool!

# DIP AND CHEW

**W**hat do the Grand Canyon, the Bermuda Triangle and people chewing tobacco have in common? They are all inexplicable wonders of the world! Why anyone would choose to tuck a wad of foul-tasting dip or chew in his or her cheeks and constantly spit smelly brown juice is a total mystery.

Raunchy as it is, smokeless tobacco is a seriously addictive habit for lots of Americans—and more and more of them are girls. Maybe a friend tells you it's fun or you see your favorite baseball player packing a fat lipper. Some kids get into it because they think it'll give them a good buzz or that it's safer than cigarettes. Well, guess what? It's not! Dip and chew are just as addictive and harmful as smoking. When you stuff smokeless tobacco into your mouth, you get little cuts that allow the nicotine to soak into your bloodstream. If you do it for long enough, those cuts turn into a big gaping hole in your face. Down the road, that rebel habit of yours can cause a bunch of terrible stuff to happen to your body, ranging from a permanent sagging pouch in your lip to deathly cancers and heart problems.

There's nothing cool about dip or chew. It messes with your beloved health and looks ri-DONK-ulous! Stray flecks



"Dip? You **MUST** be joking me. I guess you want me to scratch myself and belch, too? Please."

## Red Flags

### DO YOU HAVE ...

- A funky mouth (bad breath, sores, stained, decayed teeth and cracked lips)
- A sore throat
- Some loss of ability to taste and smell

### YOU'RE HEADED FOR ...

- Addiction
- Gum disease/gingivitis
- Cancer of the tongue, mouth and throat
- Heart problems/high blood pressure
- Ulcers
- Face disfigurement

of tobacco on your front teeth and nasty brown spit is the first step to making you the most unkissable girl on the planet! Why even try it? It tastes nasty and will probably make you puke. Give your face a break—skip the dip!

## Deal With it

- Chew gum! It's a much healthier, tastier and more attractive habit.
- Get an anti-tobacco attitude.
- Tell the people pressuring you that you might puke all over them if you dip and ask them if they still want you to try it.
- Respect yourself—really, that's the only way to get others to respect you.

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION, SURF:

- [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) Oral health information
- [www.patchproject.org](http://www.patchproject.org) Program against teen chewing

*Additional resources are listed in the Resources section of this Guide.*