

BREAKFAST DEBATE · PUBLISHED 2026-08-30

Should nicotine pouches face cigarette rules?

Hear both sides of a public-health debate, then practise acknowledging a fair point before making your own argument.

B2–C1 · level guide

8 min video

6 words · 4 expressions · full transcript

First, watch the episode. Then make the English your own.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZemN_DzAEYg

01 Words worth keeping.

Vocabulary from the episode. Every “Example” below is a new practice sentence.

loopholes plural noun

Gaps in rules that let people avoid their intended limits.

EXAMPLE The new policy closes loopholes that allowed hidden service charges.

bystanders plural noun

People who are nearby but are not directly involved.

EXAMPLE The police asked bystanders whether they had seen the accident.

proportionate adjective

Appropriate in size or strength for the situation.

EXAMPLE The response should be proportionate to the seriousness of the mistake.

combustion noun

The process of burning a substance.

EXAMPLE The science class compared combustion with other chemical reactions.

incentive noun

Something that encourages a person to take a particular action.

EXAMPLE A travel discount gives commuters an incentive to use the train.

parity noun

Equal treatment, value or status.

EXAMPLE The staff asked for pay parity across the two offices.

02 Borrow these expressions.

The expressions are quoted from the episode. Meanings and examples are learning notes.

01 “To look at this directly”

A way to introduce your main point clearly and without delay.

EXAMPLE To look at this directly, our current timetable leaves no room for mistakes.

02 “What should concern us most is that”

A way to draw attention to the risk you consider most important.

EXAMPLE What should concern us most is that some pupils cannot access the lessons.

03 “That observation is certainly true, but”

A way to accept part of an argument before challenging its conclusion.

EXAMPLE That observation is certainly true, but a smaller trial could still be useful.

04 “without putting off”

Without discouraging people or making them lose interest.

EXAMPLE We need clearer rules without putting off new volunteers.

03 · YOUR TURN

A thought worth saying.

Choose a question. Speak for 30–60 seconds. Try one word or expression from this pack.

- When two products have different risks, should they follow the same rules? Explain one benefit and one drawback.
- Choose the argument you disagree with most. First acknowledge a fair point, then explain your objection.

A useful starting point: “I think... because... For example...”

Levels are editorial estimates to help you choose a lesson, not a formal language assessment.

04 Listen. Read. Connect.

Complete narration from the episode. Number spelling follows the spoken script. Read along, then listen again with the page closed.

The Trailer

DAVID

Major tobacco manufacturers have expanded sponsorship of music festivals and sports events to promote nicotine pouches. That marketing push began because tobacco companies are racing to sign up loyal customers before new restrictions arrive. Health advocates demand full cigarette bans, while opponents say equal rules will discourage smokers from switching. Should nicotine pouches face cigarette-style bans? Which side are you on: ban pouch promotion everywhere, or keep lighter rules to help smokers quit?

The Facts

DAVID

Nicotine pouches are small flavoured sachets placed between the lip and gum. They release nicotine into the bloodstream without burning any tobacco. UK pouch sales reached an estimated three hundred and eighty-four million pounds in twenty twenty-five. That compares with nearly twelve billion pounds spent on traditional cigarettes. Now ministers are advancing plans for a smokefree generation. Tom, should governments apply the exact same strict bans to nicotine pouches?

Round 1 · The Case For

TOM

To look at this directly, tobacco giants are using festivals to hook new young customers. Brands like Nordic Spirit, Zyn, and Velo sponsor music stages and sports events. They know pouch users develop strong brand loyalty very quickly. So companies are rushing to recruit buyers before legal advertising bans take effect. Rising pouch revenues have already lifted the stock market valuations of major tobacco firms. What should concern us most is that nicotine is a powerful, highly addictive drug. Medical research confirms nicotine damages developing brains and creates long-term cardiovascular risks. Those clear health dangers easily outweigh any claimed daily focus or wellness benefits. Without cigarette-level bans, we will simply allow a new wave of youth addiction.

DAVID

Tom argues that aggressive marketing exploits legal loopholes to hook young people on addictive nicotine. He believes equal bans are necessary to prevent serious long-term health harms. Emily, how do you see the case against equal regulation?

Round 2 · The Case Against

EMILY

Treating pouches like cigarettes ignores the vital difference between burning tobacco and smokeless nicotine. Combustion produces toxic smoke, but oral pouches deliver nicotine without burning anything. The UK government itself proposed simple white packaging specifically to preserve adult switching. Ministers designed those rules to deter children without putting off smokers who want to quit. Under the smokefree generation plan, helping current smokers switch remains an essential public goal. Furthermore, indoor smoking bans exist to eliminate dangerous secondhand smoke for bystanders. Because pouches produce no smoke or vapour, they create zero passive risk for other people. Applying identical public bans removes the main incentive for smokers to choose cleaner alternatives.

DAVID

Emily argues that pouches do not produce harmful secondhand smoke and help smokers quit. She warns that identical bans could weaken the government's wider smokefree goals. Tom, how do you respond to Emily's argument?

Round 3 · For Rebuts

TOM

That observation is certainly true, but partial rules always leave dangerous commercial loopholes. I agree that pouches eliminate combustion and can assist smokers who want to quit. However, public health policy only succeeds when statutory baselines are completely uniform and clear. When Scotland introduced its strict indoor smoking ban, secondhand smoke fell by ninety-six percent. That dramatic success happened because the statutory standard applied everywhere without confusing exemptions. The UK is now banning tobacco sales for anyone born in twenty-nine or later. If pouches escape equal controls, tobacco firms will simply shift youth marketing to smokeless products.

DAVID

Tom points to Scotland's smoking ban to prove that clear, uniform laws deliver decisive results. He insists equal standards are essential to protect the smokefree generation policy. Emily, your rebuttal.

Round 4 · Against Rebuts

EMILY

Aggressive festival marketing is a fair concern, but full parity is the wrong tool. Tobacco companies certainly exploited marketing gaps at music events to build early brand loyalty. Yet heavy-handed parity penalises a small three hundred and eighty-four million pound market. That emerging sector is tiny compared to the eleven billion pound traditional cigarette trade. Governments can easily stop youth advertising and enforce age limits without banning public adult use. Targeted age checks protect teenagers while keeping safer options available for adult smokers.

The Crux

DAVID

Today's debate turns on festival promotions and the rapid rise of nicotine pouches. The core question is whether identical cigarette bans protect teenagers or harm switching smokers. Scotland's indoor smoking ban proved that strict statutory rules reduced secondhand smoke by ninety-six percent. Tom believes that precedent shows why equal rules are necessary to stop corporate marketing. Emily counters that pouches produce no smoke and require separate, proportionate regulation. In six months, watch UK youth pouch uptake alongside adult cigarette smoking quit rates.

Your Turn

DAVID

Now it's your turn to practise three spoken debate phrases from today's discussion. First, use this frame to open your main point directly. To look at this directly, marketing rules must protect young consumers. To look at this directly, adult smokers need accessible quitting alternatives. To look at this directly, statutory baselines provide essential market certainty. Second, use this frame to highlight a major risk or priority. What should concern us most is that early addiction damages developing brains. What should concern us most is that heavy rules deter switching smokers. What should concern us most is that commercial loopholes invite aggressive marketing. Third, use this frame to grant a fair point before offering your counterargument. That observation is certainly true, but targeted age restrictions solve the problem. That observation is certainly true, but tobacco companies quickly exploit legal gaps. That observation is certainly true, but public health policy demands clear standards. Choose one of these phrases and share your verdict in the comments below. Thank you for watching The Breakfast Debate, and join us again next time.

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