



Milwaukee Bucks can use the 2026-27 salary cap to fuel rebuild

SPORTS, 1B

Oshkosh Northwestern

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REBRANDING NICOTINE

Nicotine is the primary driver of tobacco addiction in the form of cigarettes, vapes and most other forms of commercial tobacco. The greatest health risks arise when tobacco is burned, which generates thousands of toxic substances.

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Movement touts addictive drug as beneficial, but dangers persist

Hasmeena Kathuria
University of Wisconsin-Madison
THE CONVERSATION

An ironic development emerging alongside the “Make America Healthy Again” movement is the portrayal of nicotine as a wellness and performance-enhancing product. Across social media, podcasts, wellness communities and tech startups, prominent wellness personalities and other influencers are portraying nicotine as a misunderstood compound whose potential benefits have been overshadowed by its negative association with cigarette smoking.

As a result, nicotine is being repositioned from an addictive substance linked to tobacco use to a natural product that can be used for everything from improving focus to protecting against cognitive decline. This trend includes use of nicotine alone in noncombustible products such as nicotine pouches, or in combination with caffeine and nootropics, which are substances marketed to enhance cognition.

As a pulmonary physician-scientist who studies nicotine addiction and the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine products, I am concerned about claims that nicotine can enhance wellness, productivity and cognitive performance.

Distinguishing between nicotine and tobacco

Some of these claims stem from the observation that nicotine is a naturally occurring plant compound found primarily in tobacco and in nightshade vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant in trace amounts. Proponents of nicotine use also draw on studies suggesting that nicotine can affect certain aspects of cognition and brain function.

However, extending these findings to broad claims about productivity, brain health, longevity or wellness goes well beyond what has been shown in human studies.

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The greatest health risks arise when tobacco is burned, which generates thousands of toxic substances, including carcinogens, carbon monoxide and fine particulate matter. Repeated exposure to these combustion products can cause cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease and numerous other smoking-related illnesses.

While many smoking-related diseases result from exposure to combustion products, nicotine itself has well-known negative effects on the brain and body. Nicotine activates the sympathetic nervous system – the body’s “fight or flight” response – which increases heart rate and blood pressure and disrupts sleep. Repeated stimulation of this system can place additional strain on the heart.

Nicotine exposure is of particular concern during critical phases of development. Prenatal exposure to nicotine has been associated with adverse effects on fetal growth and development.

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Professors report less time for students

Teaching load increased in deal for UW funding

Nadia Scharf
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

One month into the new school year, a new Universities of Wisconsin requirement that faculty members spend a certain number of hours in front of a class has meant frustration for many – not because of what they’re now required to do, but because of what they say it doesn’t account for.

In 2025, state legislators approved a last-minute state budget that increased funding for the Universities of Wisconsin, also known as the UW system, by \$256 million, the largest increase in 20 years. But those funds came with strings: among them, UW faculty would be mandated to meet credit hour teaching requirements. These workload requirements went into effect at the start of this school year.

Under the new mandate, all full-time faculty and academic staff must teach at least 24 credits per academic year, with a carveout for UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee, where professors are expected to produce more research.

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Free guest home opens for ThedaCare families in Neenah

Nida Tazeen
Oshkosh Northwestern
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

NEENAH – Families of trauma patients receiving care in Neenah now have access to a newly built guest home designed to help them stay near loved ones during hospitalization.

The home was created through support from the ThedaCare Foundation-Neenah and Bergstrom Automotive, according to a community announcement.

Located at 525 Lincoln St., near ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah, the residence is intended to reduce lodging concerns for families traveling far from home while a relative undergoes trauma care.

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