

# Shisha Smoking (the hubble bubble pipe)

## What is a Hookah and Shisha?

- ◆ A hookah is a water pipe used to smoke tobacco through cooled water. The tobacco is heated in the bowl at the top of the hookah and the smoke is filtered through the water in the base of the hookah.
- ◆ Alternate names for hookahs include: water pipe, goza, borry, hubble-bubble, arhile and narghile.
- ◆ Shisha is the tobacco smoked in a hookah. It is a very moist and sticky tobacco that has been soaked in honey or molasses.
- ◆ There are a variety of shisha flavours including plum, coconut, mango, apple, mint and strawberry.



## History of Hookahs

It has been around for over 1000 years. The concept of filtered smoke through a pipe originated in India and has lately gained popularity in many other parts of the world including the UK. Shisha cafes have become a common sight in our cities. Shisha parties are springing up all over university campuses and it's even consumed in the home. The activity itself is seen to be relaxing, as people tend to smoke the shisha in groups, where time is of no object.

## Myths and the Truths

**MYTH 1:** Hookah smoke is filtered through water so it filters out any harmful ingredients.

**TRUTH 1:** Smoking tobacco through water does not filter out cancer-causing chemicals. Water-filtered smoke can damage the lungs and heart as much as cigarette smoke.

**MYTH 2:** Inhaling hookah smoke does not burn the lungs, so it is not unhealthy.

**TRUTH 2:** The hookah smoke does not burn the lungs when inhaled because it is cooled through the water in the base of the hookah. Even though the smoke is cooled, it still contains carcinogens (cancer-causing chemicals) and it is still unhealthy.

**MYTH 3:** Smoking hookahs are healthier than smoking cigarettes.

**TRUTH 3:** Hookah smoke is just as dangerous as cigarette smoke. Hookahs generate smoke in different ways: cigarette smoke is generated by burning tobacco, while hookah smoke is produced by heating tobacco in a bowl using charcoal. The end product is the same—smoke, containing carcinogens (cancer-causing chemicals) . 30 minutes of Shisha use can equate to the equivalent of 100 cigarettes.

**MYTH 4:** Smoking a hookah is not as addictive as a cigarette as there is no nicotine.

**TRUTH 4:** Shisha contains nicotine. In a 60-minute hookah session, smokers are exposed to 100-200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single cigarette.

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**MYTH 5:** Herbal shisha is healthier than regular shisha.

**TRUTH 5:** Similar to herbal cigarettes, herbal shisha exposes the smoker to tar and carcinogens.

**MYTH 6:** Shisha tobacco contains fruit, so is healthier than regular tobacco.

**TRUTH 6:** Tobacco is tobacco, no matter how you look at it. Shisha is often soaked in molasses or honey and mixed with fruit, but it still contains cancer-causing chemicals and nicotine. Stick to traditional methods of eating fruit.

There's a myth that the smoke is filtered by the water. The water used in the hookah bowl is often thought to have some filtering function as well as cooling and humidification of the smoke product. However, it is not true. In fact, smoking Hookah delivers 36 times more tar than a cigarette, 400 times more carbon monoxide (some getting typical readings of 130ppm, an average cigarette smoker would get around 20-30ppm) and 70% more nicotine. Water pipes smokers are five times more likely than non-smokers to show signs of gum disease. People who smoked water pipes have five times the risk of lung cancer as non-smokers.

In one bar in Leicester, 17 people had collapsed through shisha smoking as their carbon monoxide levels were so high they were deprived of oxygen. To read more about the dangers of carbon monoxide (a highly toxic gas) please refer to our Carbon Monoxide factsheet.

The problem is many know that smoking cigarettes is bad for their health, but there is not much advice around about the dangers of smoking shisha. Also as it is done in groups and in some communities is seen as traditional, the dangers are not necessarily obvious.

### Quick Facts

- ◆ There is no safe level of shisha smoking. It contains chemicals such as arsenic, formaldehyde, nickel, lead and chromium. There is also a risk of infections such as swine flu, herpes or tuberculosis.
- ◆ 36 times more tar
- ◆ 30 minutes of Shisha use can equate to the equivalent of 100 cigarettes.
- ◆ 15 times more carbon monoxide
- ◆ Smoking a hookah requires taking longer and harder drags, increasing levels of inhaled nicotine and carcinogens in the lungs.
- ◆ The longer the hookah session, the more nicotine and toxins the smoker takes in.
- ◆ A 45 to 60 minute hookah session exposes the smoker to approximately the same amount of tar and nicotine as one pack of cigarettes.
- ◆ Sharing mouthpieces without washing them can increase the risk of spreading colds, flu, and infections—even oral herpes.
- ◆ As the carbon monoxide intake is so high, there is a risk of flu like symptoms, dizziness, drowsiness, sickness, unconsciousness, brain damage and even death
- ◆ Health risks of smoking hookahs include cancer, heart disease, lung damage, and dental disease.