

The Hookah

Hookah is a single or multi-stemmed (often glass-based) water pipe for smoking tobacco. It originated in India and was introduced to Turkey during the 17th century. Later, it was adopted by Iran and the Arab world. Hookah is also known as Argileh, Shisha, Goza, Hubble Bubble and Nargileh.

The Hookah apparatus is usually made of the following components:

The body

a hollow metal tube connected to the head and submerged in the water inside the bowl. The body seals the opening of the water bowl.

The head

a small clay bowl where the moist tobacco is placed inside and heated by a burning charcoal above it. The clay head has holes in the bottom, allowing smoke to pass into the body's central conduit.

The water bowl

usually a glass bowl filled halfway with water, in which the body is submerged. The top of the water bowl is sealed by a gasket attached to the body. The water cools and humidifies the smoke coming from the body. Other liquids like fruit juice are sometimes added to the water or used as a substitute.

The hose

a flexible, slender tube that allows smoke to be drawn from the top of the water bowl.



When a smoker inhales through the hose, the smoke passes from the heated tobacco through the Hookah body into the water (generating a bubbling sound), then goes through the hose and into the smoker's mouth and lungs.

Hookah tobacco is moist tobacco that comes in a variety of flavors such as apple, cherry, strawberry, and chocolate. The packaging of Hookah tobacco often contains misleading information and lacks proper warning labels.

Hookah is smoked in various settings. It can be smoked in one's home, as the Hookah tobacco and apparatus are easily accessible. It is also served in restaurants or special lounges where it may be shared among multiple patrons simultaneously.



Myths & Facts about Hookah

The popularity of Hookah is increasing. Many myths minimize the dangerous health risks associated with it, but the facts are clear.

- Hookah smokers believe that it is a safer alternative to cigarette smoking, while the fact is the chemicals associated with cigarettes are the same in Hookah tobacco products.
(Shihadeh and Saleh-2005)
- The charcoal used for heating Hookah tobacco releases higher levels of Carbon Monoxide (CO) than when smoking traditional cigarettes.
- Another myth is that the water inside the Hookah filters out the harmful substances in the tobacco smoke. In fact, water cools the Hookah tobacco smoke, so that it feels less harsh, prompting deeper inhalations and longer retention of tobacco-filled breaths, increasing harm.
(Shafagoj and Mohammed-2002)
- Hookah users believe that the smell, taste, and smoothness of the sweetened and flavored tobacco causes less irritation to the airways. In fact, this leads to a sustained period of higher harmful exposure to the toxic substances found in Hookah tobacco.
(Knishkoway and Amitai-2005)

The Reality of Hookah

Hookah use is spreading rapidly. Hookah bars have been increasing across the U.S., especially on or near college campuses.

One study found experimentation with Hookah for 14-year-olds was 23% and rose to 40% for 18-year-olds.

Youth are drawn to the colorful packaging, the false claims of popularity of smoking Hookah, and appeals to vanity.

Hookah smoking causes serious harm to the smoker and others exposed to the smoke. These health effects include:

- Lung and oral cancer
- Respiratory illnesses
- Heart disease
- Decreased fertility
- Tooth loss

In a typical hookah smoking session that lasts 45-80 minutes, the smoker may inhale as much smoke as a cigarette smoker would inhale consuming 100 or more cigarettes. (WHO)

As Hookah is often shared in a group, the risk of spreading infectious diseases is increased, despite the use of a disposable mouthpiece, and may put the smoker at risk of contracting infectious diseases like:

- Tuberculosis
- Hepatitis C
- Herpes
- H. pylori

**A smoker can
inhale 100x more
smoke in one
hookah session
than in a single
cigarette.**

*(WHO study group on Tobacco product
regulation, advisory note-2005)*



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