

Hookah smoking: Is it safer than cigarette smoking?

Hookah smoking is not safer than cigarette smoking.

A hookah is a water pipe. The main parts of it include a smoke chamber, a water bowl, a pipe and a hose. Some other names for a hookah are a narghile, shisha, maassel and goza.

The tobacco that's used in a hookah is often flavored. When someone uses a hookah, the tobacco is heated with charcoal. The charcoal burns the tobacco, and the tobacco smoke is pulled into the water bowl. A person uses a mouthpiece to breathe in. The smoke passes through the water and a rubber tube that ends in the mouthpiece.

The tobacco is no less toxic in a hookah pipe than in a cigarette. The water in the hookah cools the smoke, but it does not filter out the toxins in the smoke. Hookah smokers may breathe in more tobacco smoke than cigarette smokers do. That's because one hookah smoking session can last an hour or longer.

Hookah smoking can pose many dangers:

Hookah smoke has high levels of harmful chemicals. These include tar, carbon monoxide, heavy metals and cancer-causing chemicals called carcinogens. In fact, hookah smokers are exposed to more carbon monoxide and smoke than are cigarette smokers.

As with cigarette smoking, hookah smoking is linked to:

- Lung, bladder, stomach, esophageal and oral cancers.
- Heart disease.
- Other serious conditions, such as lung diseases and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Hookah smoking delivers high levels of nicotine, as cigarette smoking does. Nicotine is the habit-forming chemical in tobacco that keeps a person smoking.

Hookah smoke poses dangers linked to secondhand smoke.

Hookah smoking by pregnant people is linked to low birth weight babies.

Using an unclean pipe or sharing a pipe with other smokers is risky. It could raise your chance of getting a disease such as:

- The flu.
- Tuberculosis.
- Herpes.
- Hepatitis.
- COVID-19.

Newer electronic hookahs, called e-hookahs, are vaping devices. They use a battery to heat a liquid into a vapor, which users breathe in. The liquid can come with or without nicotine and flavors. Research into the health effects of e-hookahs is still early. But use of vaping devices, including e-hookahs, is not safe for most people. And tobacco use in any form is not safe for anyone.