

The Great Hookah Hoax

Some students have told us they think smoking hookah is the same as inhaling fruit-flavored air — in other words, harmless. We did some research to test this theory.

Hookah pipes (also known as water pipes, shisha, narghile and argihile) originated in the Middle East. Now hookah bars are popping up in big cities and college towns.

Hookah pipes use a moist tobacco flavored with fruit and honey or molasses. To make smoke, burning charcoal (often quick-started with lighter fluid) is placed on top of the moist tobacco mix. Hookah smoke is then pulled through water, which cools it and makes it feel smoother and easier to inhale than cigarette smoke.

We spoke with Hookah bar employees who told us that the water is usually changed only at the end of the day. So don't assume your water is clean. Research demonstrates that, even if you change the water with each use, very little tar, carbon monoxide, nicotine and other chemical toxins are removed. See chart for comparison.

Another difference between hookahs and cigarettes is the amount of smoke exposure.

An average cigarette smoker takes 10 puffs over five minutes. Because the smoke is hot, a typical cigarette

Toxin Content of Smoke*			
A single hookah session compared to smoking a single cigarette			
CHEMICAL	HOOKAH	CIGARETTE	COMPARISON hookah to cigarette
"Tar"	802.0 mg	22.3 mg	36 times the tar
Nicotine	2.96 mg	1.74 mg	1.7 times the nicotine
Carbon Monoxide	145.0 mg	17.3 mg	8.4 times the carbon monoxide

Sources: Shihadeh & Saleh (2005) Food and Chemical Toxicology Vol 43(5): 655-661
 Djordjevic et al (2000) Journal of National Cancer Institute Vol 92: 106-111

* We would like to thank Dr. Thomas Eissenberg of Virginia Commonwealth University, who assisted us with the accuracy of this poster and in understanding how to make a fair comparison.

puff is only about 50 ml. Because hookah smoke is cooled, even new smokers can inhale deeply and hold about 500 ml per puff. In a single session, a hookah smoker takes about 100 puffs over about 45 minutes. The hookah smoker's lungs are exposed to approximately 50,000 ml of smoke or the equivalent of 25 two-liter bottles of smoke. In contrast, by the end of a cigarette, smoker's lungs have been exposed to about 500 ml of smoke or a quarter of one two-liter bottle of smoke. For cancer causing chemicals, it's exposure that matters.

Oh, and if you read a package of hookah tobacco, you may be impressed by "0% tar." There's more to this story. No tobacco has tar — until you light it. Tar is produced by burning. Hookah tobacco has no tar, but hookah *smoke* looks darker than cigarette smoke because it contains *more* tar.

So before you hit that pipe, hit the computers to research hookah so you can make an informed decision.



As we all know....

Most college students don't smoke cigarettes, and most who do smoke want to quit. If you know a cigarette smoker or a hookah smoker who wants to quit, there is help. Now two different smoking cessation pills are available with a prescription, Chantix and Bupropion.

In Virginia, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free tobacco cessation counseling.

1-800-QUIT NOW
www.smokefree.gov • www.smokefreevirginia.org