

Hooked on Hookah? No Matter How You Smoke It, It's Still Tobacco

The truth about hookah is this:

- It has five times the cancer-causing agents as cigarettes.
- It has 100 times the tar that you'll find in cigarettes.
- Hookah has four times the amount of nicotine as cigarettes.
- It has 11 times more carbon monoxide than cigarettes.
- It contains 69 different carcinogens

Hookah smoking can also lead to mouth cancer, gum disease and herpes.

Myth: Hookah smoke is better for you than cigarette smoke and is not addictive.

Fact: Hookah smoke of various fruity flavors, tastes and aromas can be even more harmful than disease-causing cigarette smoke. And hookah smoke contains four times more nicotine (an addictive drug) than cigarette smoke.

Myth: Smoking hookah is less harmful than cigarettes because the smoke passes through water, which filters out the chemicals and other bad stuff.

Fact: When hookah bubbles through water at the base of a hookah pipe, it cools the smoke but does not filter any chemicals out of the smoke. This "cooling" process forces a hookah smoker to inhale twice as deeply as a cigarette smoker, causing chemicals, cancer-causing agents, and other harmful elements to penetrate deeper into the lungs. The charcoal that is used in hookah pipes adds even more carbon monoxide to the high levels that already exist in this type of tobacco.

Myth: Smoking hookah is social. I don't do it every day.

Fact: While smoking hookah may be social and seem like fun, the reality is that 45-60 minutes of hookah smoking is the equivalent of chain smoking 15 cigarettes. So even if you only smoke hookah sporadically, it can lead to addiction. And, if you share mouthpieces, you add the risk of getting colds, viruses like herpes, oral bacterial infections, and tuberculosis.

Source: Asotra, Kamlesh, Hooked on Hookah? What You Don't Know Can Kill You, Burning Issues: Tobacco's Hottest Topics. Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program Newsletter 7, no 3 (2005)