

# Drug Facts: Hookah



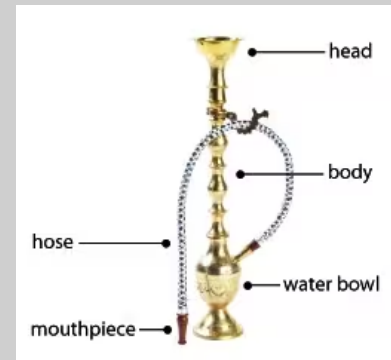
- **Hookah is not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.**
- **Smoking hookah can expose a person to harmful toxins such as carbon monoxide.**
- **Smoking hookah can increase the risk of developing certain cancers.**
- **Secondhand smoke from hookah can be harmful to those around it.**

## What Is Hookah?

Hookahs are water pipes that are used to smoke specially made tobacco mixtures. These mixtures come in a wide variety of flavors, including chocolate, licorice, cappuccino, and more. Other names for hookah include narghile, argileh, and shisha. Hookah is typically smoked in groups, with users sharing the same mouthpiece.

Hookahs can vary in shape, size, and style. A typical modern hookah has:

- A head (with holes in the bottom)
- A metal body
- A water bowl
- A flexible hose with a mouthpiece



Hookahs work by passing charcoal-heated air through the tobacco mixture and a water-filled chamber. The user then inhales the smoke through a tube and the mouthpiece. Many hookah users perceive it as being less harmful than smoking cigarettes, but it is not a safe alternative.

## Who Uses Hookah?

Hookah smoking is particularly popular among young people, especially college students and urban youth. Hookah use is also more prevalent among white individuals. In the United States, hookah use has declined over the past decade. Targeted youth interventions, impactful media campaigns, and proven tobacco prevention policies can continue to further reduce youth tobacco use.

## How Does Hookah Affect The Body?

### Hookah and Toxin Exposure

Hookah smoke is just as toxic as cigarette smoke. It contains many of the same harmful components found in cigarettes, including nicotine, tar, and heavy metals.

The charcoal used to heat the hookah tobacco can produce high levels of carbon monoxide, metals, and cancer-causing chemicals. The water-filled chamber does not filter these toxins, and the smoke remains filled with high levels of harmful agents even after passing through it.

Smoking hookah can lead to greater exposure to toxic substances than smoking cigarettes as people often smoke hookah for extended periods during a single session.

### **Hookah and Disease Risk**

People who smoke hookah are at a higher risk of developing serious health issues. It can increase the likelihood of lung, bladder, and certain oral cancers. Hookah smoking also raises the risk of heart disease due to toxic chemicals that contribute to clogged arteries. Additionally, sweeteners and flavorings in the tobacco can expose users to more smoke-related toxins, further harming lung health.

Because hookah is often smoked in prolonged social sessions where a mouthpiece is shared among multiple people, it also increases the risk of infectious diseases such as colds, influenza, and herpes.

Smoking hookah during pregnancy can negatively affect the baby's health. Babies born to individuals who smoke hookah daily are more likely to have a lower-than-normal birth weight. They are also at an increased risk of developing respiratory diseases.

### **Hookah and Secondhand Smoke**

Secondhand smoke from hookahs contains not only tobacco smoke but also smoke from the heat source, such as charcoal. The chemicals in this smoke pose health risks to both those smoking and those exposed to the smoke.

### **How Can The Use of Hookah Be Addressed?**

Implementing policies can help reduce hookah use. Policies such as restricting the sale of flavored tobacco, including hookah tobacco, and increasing taxes on hookah products can effectively address hookah use. States, communities, tribes, and territories can implement evidence-based, population-level strategies fairly and equitably to reduce the use of all tobacco products, including hookah.

These strategies include:

- Reducing the advertising and marketing of hookah and other tobacco products to young people.
- Developing educational initiatives that describe targeted tobacco industry marketing tactics.

## **Connecticut Resources**

### **CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

[www.ct.gov/DMHAS](http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS)

### **CT Quitline**

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Text 1-877-777-6534

## **National Resources**

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### **American Lung Association**

[www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)

### **SmokeFree**

[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

