



Tobacco and health fact sheet: Waterpipe tobacco

Waterpipe tobacco, like all tobacco products including cigarettes and cigars, is harmful to your health so consider quitting.

Waterpipes have been around for at least four centuries. They have been used mainly in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) including countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey¹, as well as countries such as Pakistan and India².

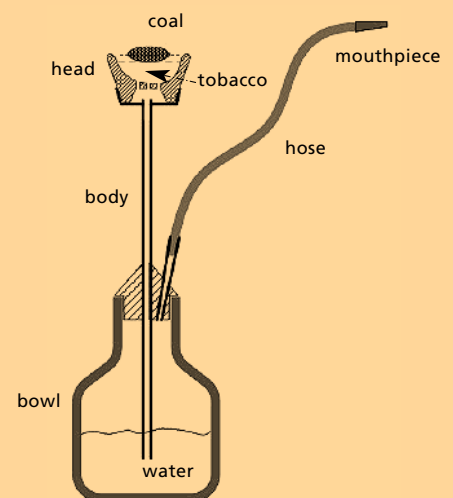
Who smokes waterpipe tobacco and why?

Traditionally, waterpipe tobacco was smoked by elderly Middle Eastern men⁴. However, since the 1990s waterpipe tobacco smoking has become more prevalent in the EMR⁵ and in European countries, the United States and Australia⁶. It is becoming popular with university students and young adults².

This rising popularity is linked to an incorrect belief that waterpipe tobacco smoking is less dangerous than cigarette smoking². It has also become popular because of the introduction of flavourings, its wide availability, low cost, and marketing². These factors have made waterpipe tobacco smoking socially acceptable. It is used by both men and women, usually at social gatherings at home or at bars and cafes which offer waterpipe^{1,2}.

What is a waterpipe?

A waterpipe is known by various names such as nargila, narghile, argileh, hubble bubble, hookah, shisha and goza. The waterpipe is made up of four parts: the head, body, bowl and hose. A smoker breathes in through the mouthpiece, and smoke is drawn down into the bowl and into the mouth through the hose.



Source: WHO 2005³

What is in waterpipe tobacco?

A typical one-hour long waterpipe tobacco smoking session involves breathing in 100-200 times the volume of smoke compared to a single cigarette⁷. Mainstream waterpipe tobacco smoke contains significant amounts of nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar and higher levels of heavy metals (arsenic, cobalt, chromium and lead) compared to cigarettes⁸.

The facts about waterpipe tobacco

Fact: Many tobacco toxins are **not** filtered out by the water in the waterpipe².

Fact: Fruit flavouring added to the tobacco masks the toxic substances in the tobacco². It does **not** make it a healthy choice.

Fact: Waterpipe tobacco smoke contains nicotine, an addictive drug⁸.

Health effects

Like cigarette smokers, waterpipe tobacco smokers face health effects such as cancers, heart disease, respiratory disease and problems in pregnancy such as low birth weight^{2,3,5}. Infectious diseases can also be spread from pipe sharing, including herpes, tuberculosis, hepatitis and respiratory infections². People exposed to the second-hand smoke of waterpipe tobacco are at risk of respiratory problems^{9,10}. Children are particularly vulnerable.

Common heat sources used to burn the tobacco, such as wood cinders or charcoal, can also increase health risks. When these fuels are burnt they produce their own toxic substances, including high levels of carbon monoxide, heavy metals and cancer-causing chemicals^{8,11}.

For assistance to quit call the **Quitline on 137 848** or the **Arabic Quitline on 1300 7848 03**. These are confidential services which provide assistance in overcoming nicotine addiction.

The advertising, promotion and selling of waterpipe tobacco must comply with NSW tobacco legislation. For further information refer to the *Waterpipe tobacco: Information for retailers fact sheet*.

To get a copy of this fact sheet, or to get more copies of *Tobacco and health fact sheet: Waterpipe tobacco* call the Resource Distribution Unit on (02) 9879 0443.

For further information contact:
Tobacco Control Team
Sydney South West Area Health Service
Telephone: (02) 9828 5911

References

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NB. The graphic health warning images shown on this fact sheet are examples of the graphic images that must appear on the packaging of most tobacco products sold in Australia.