



Shisha (Waterpipe) Smoking Factsheet for

Health Care Professionals

What is in shisha tobacco?

Shisha tobacco usually contains tobacco fermented in molasses and flavoured with fruit flavours. Shisha smoke contains significant amounts of nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar and other toxins. The water in the shisha does not remove any of the toxic substances and the fruit flavour does not make it a healthy choice.

Who smokes shisha and why?

Shisha smoking is often a social activity where people may share the same pipe. In some cultures, children may smoke with their parents. Since the introduction of flavoured tobacco in the early 1990s, shisha use has increased among young people, starting in the Middle East and expanding to other countries and continents, mainly through universities and schools. The sweet fragrance and taste of the smoke may explain why some people, particularly young people who otherwise would not use tobacco, begin to use shisha. A 2017 Cancer Council report on Australian Secondary School Students indicated that 9% of secondary students have ever used shisha or waterpipe tobacco.

How does shisha smoking impact on health?

Shisha smoke is toxic. A shisha smoking session may expose the smoker to more smoke over a longer period of time than occurs when smoking a cigarette.

45 minutes of shisha = 100 cigarettes

The shisha smoker therefore inhales as much smoke during one session as a cigarette smoker would inhale consuming 100 or more.

Shisha smoke contains carcinogens, toxins, such as nitric oxide and heavy metals, and nicotine.

What is a shisha?

A shisha is a smoking device that is also known as a nargila, argileh, waterpipe or hookah.

It is made up of four parts: the head, body, bowl and hose. The smoker breathes in through the mouthpiece in the hose. Smoke is drawn from the head, down the body, through the water in the bowl and into the mouth.

Short term effects of smoking shisha include:

- Elevated heart rate and blood pressure
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Impaired lung function and exercise capacity

In the long term, smoking shisha increases the risk of:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Cancers including lung, head and neck, oesophageal, gastric, urinary and bladder cancers
- Stroke
- Chronic rhinitis
- Male infertility
- Addiction due to nicotine
- Periodontal disease
- Premature labour and low birth weight in babies

In addition, the burning charcoal generates high levels of carbon monoxide. Shisha smokers face the same health risks as cigarette smokers, including cancers, heart disease, lung disease and problems in pregnancy such as premature labour and low birth weight. Infectious diseases such as herpes, tuberculosis, hepatitis and respiratory infections can also spread through sharing shisha. While some shisha cafes provide new pipe mouth pieces for each patron, the hose is still shared and can transmit infection.

Shisha FACTS

Fruit flavourings mask the taste of toxic substances and do not make it a healthy choice

Toxins are **not** filtered out by the water in shisha

Shisha tobacco contains nicotine, which is an **addictive drug**

All forms of tobacco and tobacco related products are harmful

45 minutes of shisha smoking is equal to smoking **100** cigarettes



What are the current shisha laws in NSW?

All forms of smoking are banned in NSW **enclosed public spaces**, such as:

- workplaces
- cafes
- restaurants
- shopping centres
- trains and buses

All forms of smoking are banned in NSW in certain **outdoor public spaces**, such as:

- outdoor seated dining areas
- sports grounds
- swimming pools
- public transport stops

All forms of smoking are banned in NSW **within four metres** of:

- entrances to public buildings, such as cafes and restaurants
- outdoor seated dining areas

All forms of smoking are banned in NSW **within 10 metres** of:

- children's outdoor play equipment
- food fair stalls

Are tobacco-free and herbal shisha products safe?

No, tobacco-free or herbal shisha can be just as harmful. The wood cinders or charcoal used to burn water-pipe tobacco include carbon monoxide and other cancer-causing chemicals. Smoke from tobacco-free or herbal shisha products is dangerous, and has similar toxins as tobacco products.

Can second-hand shisha smoke impact on health?

YES, second-hand smoke is just as harmful. The toxic chemicals in shisha tobacco are also present in high quantities in shisha smoke.

Breathing in second-hand shisha tobacco smoke can increase the risk of heart disease, lung cancer and other lung diseases. It can also worsen asthma and bronchitis. Inhaling second-hand smoke is even more dangerous for children, making them more likely to suffer health problems such as bronchitis, pneumonia and asthma.



Where can I find more information and get help?

iCanQuit

www.icanquit.com.au

ShishaNoThanks

www.shishanothanks.org.au

**Lebanese Muslim Association
Quit Smoking Clinic: 0420 915 528**

Quitline: 13 7848

Quitline in other languages

Arabic: 1300 784 803

Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin): 1300 784 836

Vietnamese: 1300 784 865

Tobacco Information Line: 1800 357 412

You can use an interpreter to contact services by calling the Translation & Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 1450, tell them your language and ask to be connected.

For references supporting the facts above please visit: www.shishanothanks.org.au

