

Michigan Department of Community Health Tobacco Prevention and control program

Position Statement on Hookah Use

On the basis of available and overwhelming evidence, the Michigan Department of Community Health-Tobacco Prevention Program concludes that: 1) ALL tobacco products including Hookah(Argileh) are harmful to one's health, therefore the best health advice to tobacco users is to avoid and discontinue ALL tobacco products without exception; 2) The use of hookah brings with it the same serious health risks associated with all tobacco use, including exposure to second hand smoke and many serious risks of infectious diseases; and 3) It is the responsibility of the public-health organizations and public-health professionals to develop and disseminate sustained public health awareness messages explaining the risks of hookah tobacco use on the individual and on the community's health.

Introduction

Tobacco use remains the single leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States and in Michigan. ⁽¹⁾ In 2007 smoking in the United States resulted in an estimated 443,000 premature deaths and around 15,000 deaths in Michigan, and yet individuals of all ages continue to use various tobacco products. ⁽²⁾ During 2008, an estimated 18.3% of adults in the United States were current smokers while in Michigan approximately 20.5% of adults smoke. ⁽³⁾

What is the Hookah (Argileh)?

Hookah is a type of water pipe. Smoking consists of heating flavored moist tobacco placed in a clay bowl and burning charcoal that is placed atop the tobacco. The bowl is connected to a glass of water, by a pipe that dips into the water. When a smoker inhales through a hose (another flexible tube connected to the glass base, but does not dip in the water), the smoke passes from the heated tobacco through the water generating a bubbling sound, and finally passes into the smoker's mouth and lungs. ⁽⁴⁾ Smoking hookah has been a practice for many centuries in South East Asia, North Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean region. In the USA hookah bars and cafes are growing at alarming rate in most of the states targeting youth ages 18-24 years-olds. ⁽⁵⁾ Hookah is rented in restaurants and cafés for a session in which the smoker consumes a pack of tobacco which lasts on average of 45-50 minutes. It is practiced in groups as a social activity and the smokers often share the same mouth piece while the hose is passed from person to person. ⁽⁶⁾

Myths and Facts about Hookah:

- ❖ Hookah smokers believe that it is a safer alternative to cigarette smoking with fewer impurities, while in fact, the chemicals associated with cigarettes are the same in hookah tobacco products; furthermore, the charcoal used for heating it releases higher levels of carbon monoxide making it worse than cigarettes. In addition to tobacco they are smoking in addition to tobacco the Carbon Monoxide at elevated levels. ⁽⁷⁾
- ❖ Another myth is that the water inside the hookah filters out the harmful substances, while in the tobacco smoke, while in fact the water simply cools the tobacco smoke, making it feels less harsh. The cooler smoke increases the tendency for hookah smokers' inhale more deeply than cigarette smokers, causing more harm. ^(7, 8)

- ❖ Hookah users believe that the smell, taste and smoothness of the sweetened tobacco provides less irritation to the airways, while the fact this taste and flavor appeal leads to a longer and more sustained period of higher harmful exposure to the toxic substances. ^(7, 8)

Why should we care about “Hookah”?

- ❖ Hookah smoking brings with it the same serious health risks associated with all tobacco use including second hand smoke exposure.
- ❖ Smoking hookah tobacco is not safer than cigarettes, and during one session a hookah smoker may inhale as much as smoke as a cigarette smoker would inhale consuming 100 or more cigarettes. ⁽¹⁰⁾
- ❖ In addition to the smoking risk, sharing the same mouth piece; insufficient cleaning and/or inadequate sterilizing of the hose may pose a serious risk of transmission of infectious diseases, like Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C and Helicobacter pylori. ⁽⁹⁾
- ❖ Hookah use has exploded rapidly into the youth culture, and impacts Americans in more than 40 states and hookah bars have been popping up across the U.S., especially on or near college campuses ⁽⁵⁾
- ❖ Hookah tobacco IS tobacco, and contains the addictive substance “Nicotine” and all cancer-causing substances that are found in other tobacco products. ^(8, 11)
- ❖ Hookah tobacco products are not regulated and most of them have no warning labels or ingredients. Also, youth are drawn to the colorful packaging and designs of the hookah tobacco.
- ❖ The flavored hookah tobacco is appealing to young smokers. It masks the unpleasant odor of tobacco smoke; thereby increasing the likelihood that youth will be more inclined to try hookah versus cigarettes.

References:

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