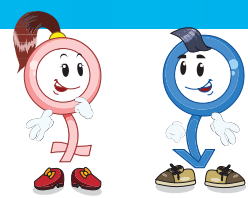


Girls and boys for change: tobacco control now



Women, waterpipes and smokeless tobacco

Increasing use of waterpipe and smokeless tobacco

In many parts of the world people use a waterpipe to smoke tobacco or use smokeless tobacco. This is particularly true in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where waterpipe and smokeless tobacco use is increasing rapidly, especially among women. The Region has some of the highest rates in the world with an overall rate of 9% of girls age 13–15 using tobacco products other than cigarettes, and country rates of over 30% in Lebanon and over 20% in Jordan, occupied Palestinian territory (West Bank), Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates. Smokeless tobacco is easier for young people to obtain than cigarettes and easier to use without drawing attention. In many countries, more women and young people use waterpipes and smokeless tobacco than smoke cigarettes. While boys are much more likely to smoke cigarettes than girls, with non-cigarette tobacco use the gap is much narrower.

Waterpipe smoking is becoming part of a new lifestyle trend in many countries, as a popular way to spend time with friends socializing. It is being promoted as fashionable, sophisticated and a sign of women's freedom. It is sometimes portrayed as a traditional activity, appealing to people's sense of identity and heritage. Waterpipe tobacco is also available in sweetened flavours, such as apple, strawberry, grape, cherry, mint and cappuccino that may particularly appeal to young people and women.

The health risks of waterpipe and smokeless tobacco use

Waterpipes and smokeless tobacco are damaging to health. However, the health dangers of waterpipe and smokeless tobacco use are little understood by users. Waterpipes and smokeless tobacco are not a safe alternative to cigarettes, and there is no proof that any device or accessory can make waterpipe smoking safer. Using a waterpipe to smoke tobacco may seriously damage the health of smokers and the health of those exposed to the second-hand smoke emitted. It is important to remember that:

- Waterpipe tobacco has significantly higher nicotine content than cigarettes. One head of unflavoured tobacco has the nicotine equivalent of 70 cigarettes. Waterpipe tobacco also contains numerous toxins known to cause lung cancer, heart diseases and other illnesses. Even after it has been passed through water, the smoke produced by a waterpipe contains high levels of toxins, including carbon monoxide, metals and cancer-causing chemicals. A typical 1-hour long waterpipe smoking session involves inhaling 100–200 times the volume of smoke inhaled with a single cigarette.
- The fuels used to heat waterpipes, including wood cinders and charcoal, produce toxins that contain high levels of carbon monoxide, metals and cancer-causing chemicals. Second-hand smoke from waterpipes is a mixture of tobacco smoke and smoke from the fuel, and therefore poses a serious risk for those inhaling it. Waterpipe use or exposure to second-hand smoke from a waterpipe can also have adverse effects during pregnancy.
- Waterpipe use is linked to chronic bronchitis and respiratory disease. It also facilitates the transmission of hepatitis and tuberculosis, being responsible for an estimated 17% of cases of tuberculosis in the Region.
- Smokeless tobacco also contains cancer-causing toxins and its use increases the risk of cancers of the oral cavity (such as cancer of the mouth, tongue, lip and gums). The nicotine in smokeless tobacco is more easily absorbed than by smoking cigarettes.



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