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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Exposing the myths of hookah smoking

The fruity aroma of hookah smoke naturally brings a false sense of security to users, particularly teens. However, studies are showing that hookah smoke poses many dangers.

The practice of smoking tobacco through a hookah pipe originated in the Middle East centuries ago. The tobacco is heated inside the hookah, filtered by water at the bottom of the pipe, and then inhaled through a hose with a mouthpiece. Hookah bars and lounges are becoming popular places to socialize, especially among young people.

A 2011 study in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* on hookah use among college students reported what many health officials already assumed: Smoking from a hookah pipe is as bad as or worse for one's health than smoking cigarettes. The study also showed that many students view hookah use as harmless.

If your son or daughter is itching to visit a hookah lounge, share these myths and facts about hookah use.

Myth: Smoking tobacco through a hookah is safer than smoking cigarettes.

Fact: Hookah smoking sessions, usually lasting 20-60 minutes, generate about 10 *liters* or more of smoke. Smoking a cigarette for five minutes generates 300-500 *milliliters* of smoke.

Myth: The water used in hookah is an effective filter against carcinogens.

Fact: Depending on various factors such as duration of smoking, depth, length and frequency of inhalation, higher levels of carcinogens may be present in hookah smoke compared to cigarette smoke. Aerosol, tar and heavy metal particles also are found in hookah smoke.

Myth: Hookah use is associated with few long-term health problems.

Fact: The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says hookah use can lead to various cancers, as well as heart and lung disease, much like cigarette smoking. In addition, diseases, such as hepatitis, herpes and tuberculosis, can spread when hose mouthpieces are shared.

For more information on hookahs and other forms of tobacco, visit the AAP's Healthy Children Web site, www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Alternative-Forms-of-Tobacco.aspx.



— Rafael Guerrero

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