

Is Hookah Smoking Safe?

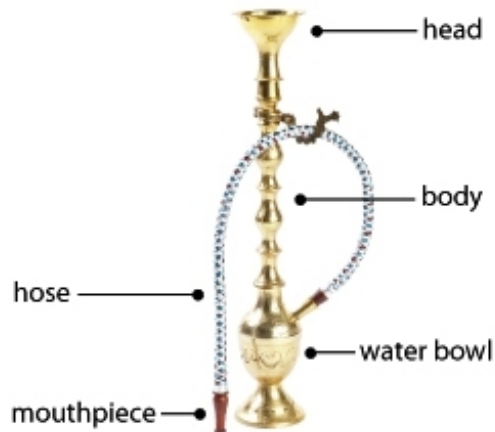


By: [Dino Flammia](#) June 25, 2012 Air Date on Radio 101.5fm

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Have you or your children tried hookah smoking? Most people believe it's a safer, and perhaps harmless, alternative to smoking cigarettes. They are wrong. The practice originated in ancient Persia and India, and now it's a growing trend among youth in the United States for several reasons. Hookah smoking is typically practiced in groups, as a mouthpiece is passed from user to user. Special hookah lounges have been popping up everywhere, contributing a "social aspect" to participants.

In New Jersey, though, the number of hookah lounges are limited due to state law. The Smoke Free Air Act prohibits smoking "in any indoor public place or workplace," exempting properties like casinos and certain tobacco retail establishments and cigar bars.



Hookah pipe (CDC.gov)

Users inhale smoke through the hookah, also known as a water pipe. Karen Blumenfeld, Executive Director of [Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy](#), said people wrongfully believe that the smoke's harmful effects are eliminated when it passes through the water bowl before hitting the user's mouth. "There's a misconception about the safety of hookah smoking," explained Blumenfeld.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said water pipe smoking delivers the addictive drug nicotine, and it is at least as toxic as cigarette smoke. A typical one-hour hookah smoking session, [according to the CDC](#), involves inhaling 100-200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single cigarette. Blumenfeld added, "There's an enormous amount of second-hand smoke that's generated from hookah smoking."

Also appealing to the younger generation is the variety of tobacco flavors available for hookah smoking. While cigarette smokers have the basic decision between regular tobacco and menthol, hookah users could choose from flavors such as chocolate, apple, licorice and cappuccino.

Despite New Jersey's policy on indoor lounges, the apparatus and tobacco could be purchased for at-home use. Similar to any other tobacco product, though, the use of hookah is illegal for anyone under the age of 19. "Parents should be aware of all the new or emerging types of tobacco products that are on the market," warned Blumenfeld.