



Marian Catholic College Kenthurst

SHISHA SMOKING

What is Shisha?

On 1 September 2015 the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 (the Act) was amended to make it an offence to sell an e-cigarette or e-cigarette accessory to a person under the age of 18 years unless it is an authorised product.

In recent years there has been a surge in popularity in the use of hookahs to smoke tobacco, particularly flavoured tobacco products (often referred to as 'shisha' – a tobacco mix containing molasses or some other form of sweetener, as well as assorted flavourings – usually fruits such as apple and lemon). Due to the use of healthy-sounding fruit flavourings and the social way that it is usually used (i.e., in restaurants and cafes) it is often regarded as a 'safer' alternative to traditional tobacco cigarettes. As a result of this recent popularity, there has been an increasing amount of research conducted examining the harms associated with the use of hookahs and what is commonly referred to as 'shisha smoking'.

'Shisha' is a tobacco mix usually containing a sweetener, as well as assorted flavourings.

Shisha smoking, via a 'hookah' or water pipe appears to be becoming increasingly popular amongst Australian young people due to the following:

- Much greater visibility – with the number of 'shisha bars' increasing across many parts of the country
- Shisha is seen as a 'social activity'
- Many do not regard it as smoking – if they do, it is seen as a 'safer way' or a 'safe alternative' to cigarette smoking
- Heavily promoted with misleading and often false claims – products marketed as 'herbal mixtures', 'nicotine free', 'tobacco free' and 'tar free'

There are three commonly held beliefs around shisha smoking that need to be addressed – these are as follows:

- **Water cleans the smoke and removes tar and other dangerous chemicals.**

The water in a water pipe is actually used to cool the smoke, thus making it easier on the throat, reducing the likelihood of hot smoke hitting the back of the throat, causing the smoker to cough. It does not remove tar.

It is also important to note that even though some of the nicotine may be filtered by the water, shisha smokers are still exposed to enough to become addicted.

- **Shisha smoke is less likely to cause cancer and other problems.**

Even though many shisha products claim to be 'tar free' it is important to remember that burning creates tar. When you heat the product and inhale the shisha smoke, it contains tar, potentially causing mouth and lung cancers, as well leading to possible heart disease, just like cigarette smoke. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) found that a single session of shisha smoking which takes approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, yields the same amount of nicotine as more than one pack of cigarettes, and the smoker inhales as much smoke as a cigarette smoker would inhale consuming 100 or more cigarettes.

- **It's a social activity and certain cultures have done it for years without problems**

Even though it is heavily promoted as a social activity, smoking in shisha bars can be particularly dangerous as it leads to the smoker inhaling more smoke, for longer periods than typical cigarette smokers. Second hand smoke is particularly dangerous in these environments, as it not only contains tobacco smoke, but smoke from the heat source (usually charcoal, particularly in the more traditional shisha bar settings). It is also important to remember that sharing hookahs can lead to the spread of a range of infectious diseases.

FACT: Shisha smoking is not a safe alternative to cigarette smoking and poses a serious potential health hazard.

Further information on the safety and legality of shisha smoking can be found at the NSW Government Health website:

www.health.nsw.gov.au

Parents and students are advised that hookahs and associated products are BANNED from Marian Catholic College.