

Informational Hearing on Hookah Bars

**Presented to
Health and Human Services**

**By
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Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to provide information regarding the health effects of hookahs. I am Dr. Susan Mosier, State Health Officer and Acting Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Hookahs are water pipes used to smoke specially-made tobacco by indirectly heating the tobacco, usually with burning embers or charcoal. Smoke is filtered through a bowl of water and then drawn through a rubber hose to a mouthpiece. Hookah smoking is typically done in groups, with the same mouthpiece passed from person to person and smoking sessions often last 40 to 45 minutes. The tobacco used in hookahs is generally mixed with a sweetener like honey or dried fruit and comes in many different flavors, including apple, mint, cherry, chocolate and coconut.ⁱ

Hookahs are most often used by young adults. Almost a third of Kansans 18 to 24 years old have tried hookahs.ⁱⁱ In 2012, 3.5 percent of Kansas high school students smoked from a hookah or water pipe at least once in the past 30 days.ⁱⁱⁱ

Hookah smoking has many of the same health risks as cigarette smoking including lung cancer, respiratory illness, low birth-weight and periodontal disease.^{iv} Hookah smokers may also be at risk for oral cancer, stomach cancer, cancer of the esophagus and reduced fertility.^{iv,v} A single hookah session produces the equivalent toxins as smoking at least one and as many as 50 cigarettes.^v Misconceptions about hookah smoke content may lead users to underestimate health risks. These health risks are compounded by the fact that the tobacco used in hookahs includes the addictive drug nicotine, as do all tobacco products. The addictive properties of nicotine derived from hookah smoking poses a serious threat for life long addiction to tobacco products, not limited to hookahs.

Secondhand smoke from hookahs can also be a health risk for nonsmokers. It contains smoke from the tobacco as well as smoke from the heat source used in the hookah.

As a public health practitioner I am concerned about the health risks of hookah use because of the toxins that users are exposed to as well as hookahs serving as another type of tobacco to which children and young adults will become addicted. The sweet flavors and social aspect of hookah smoking are appealing to many young Kansans.

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- ⁱ American Lung Association. An Emerging Deadly Trend: Waterpipe Tobacco Use. 2007. Available at http://www.lungusa2.org/embargo/slati/Trendalert_Waterpipes.pdf. Accessed February 26, 2015.
- ⁱⁱ 2013 Kansas Adult Tobacco Survey. Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Health Promotion.
- ⁱⁱⁱ 2011-2012 Youth Tobacco Survey. Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Health Promotion.
- ^{iv} Akl EA, Gaddam S, Gunukula SK, Honeine R, Jaoude PA and Irani J. The effects of waterpipe tobacco smoking on health outcomes; a systematic review. *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 2010;39 (3):834-857. Available at <http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/39/3/834.long>. Accessed February 26, 2014
- ^v Cobb C, Ward KD, Mzaiak W, Shishadeh AL, Eissenberg T. Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking: An Emerging Health Crisis in the United States. *American Journal of Health Behavior*. 2010;34(3):275-285. Available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3215592/>. Accessed February 26, 2014.