

American Lung Association Report Spotlights New Trend, Mistaken as Harmless

NEW YORK, NY, March 8, 2007– The emergence of trendy hookah bars in the United States masks the serious risk to health from hookah use, according to the American Lung Association’s new report, *An Emerging Deadly Trend – Waterpipe Tobacco Use*, released today. Hookah bars are growing in popularity in the U.S. especially among 18-to 24-year-olds, becoming the first new tobacco use trend of the 21st century. The Lung Association report warns that this trend is thriving on the widespread, but mistaken, belief that hookah use is harmless.

“Contrary to what many beginning users may think, hookah tobacco use carries many of the same risks as cigarette smoking, including being linked to lung cancer and other lung diseases,” said John L. Kirkwood, President and CEO of the American Lung Association. “Hookah tobacco use is not a safe alternative to cigarettes.”

Hookahs, also called waterpipes, are relatively new to the United States. Hookah tobacco use, however, is an ancient form of tobacco use that originated in Persia and India. The hookah heats specially-made tobacco, and then passes the smoke through a bowl of water. The smoker then draws this tobacco smoke through a mouthpiece connected to the pipe by a rubber hose.

Existing research warns that hookah smoking poses the same or similar health risks as cigarette smoking. The report also looked at the existing research behind hookah use, and finds some disturbing results:

- Because a typical smoking session lasts 40 to 45 minutes, versus five to 10 minutes to smoke a cigarette, exposure to dangerous chemicals is increased with hookah use.
- Teens were eight times more likely to experiment with cigarettes if they’d ever used a hookah.

“The fact that hookah use also increases the chances that kids will start smoking cigarettes should be of great concern to policymakers and the general public,” said Kirkwood.

The American Lung Association recommends several ways to help slow this trend in the report, including increased research on all aspects of hookah use, smokefree workplace laws that cover places where hookahs are used, and culturally appropriate cessation products and services to help addicted hookah smokers quit.

“The misperceptions surrounding hookah use mean that more young adults will risk their lives smoking what they believe is a safer product, said Kirkwood. “We need to better understand and reverse this dangerous trend.”

[Click here](#) to view the full *American Lung Association Tobacco Policy Trend Alert: an Emerging Deadly Trend – Waterpipe Tobacco Use*.