

SPECIAL REPORT

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Hookah proves to be a growing trend among teenagers

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By Molly Hopkins

While it is a known fact that teens across America experiment with cigarettes and marijuana, there seems to be a new choice of smoking pleasure that is gaining popularity. Hookah has become the “easy and cool way” to have a fun Friday night.

Hookahs are water pipes used to smoke tobacco through a hose with a tapered mouthpiece. When asked, teens assume that hookah is less harmful than regular cigarettes.

“I’ve always heard that hookah is not dangerous. So many people have told me it’s not, so I assumed it was true,” stated a male junior.

There seem to be many myths about hookah’s effects on its users. Georgia Institute of Technology School of Chemistry reported that studies demonstrated that one session of hookah smoking could be equal to almost 100 regular cigarettes, because the usual cigarette needs an average of nine puffs to be smoked and one hookah can be smoked for up to an hour with almost 20 puffs. Therefore, it means that hookah is even more dangerous to a person’s health than conventional cigarettes, according to cigarettesdigest.com.

“I found it appalling that hookah could potentially be more dangerous than cigarettes. I think a lot of kids are unaware of the effects that hookah can have on their bodies. They see it as a fun way to add to the party,” said a female junior.

So, the question is raised as to why teens continue to smoke hookah. Some suggest that the flavored tobacco attracts the youth. Elizabeth Caldwell, director of Nevada Tobacco-Free Kids office, suggests that “anti-smoking groups” are partly responsible for the growing popularity of hookah among teenagers since they have been doing their best to persuade people and especially minors that cigarettes are hazardous to health, therefore, people simply switched to hookah, thinking that it would be a safer and healthier alternative to smoking; which we know is untrue.”

According to health.ri.gov, hookah is not safer than smoking cigarettes. Hookah smokers are exposed to cancer-causing chemicals and hazardous gases such as carbon monoxide. Hookah is also linked to lung, oral and bladder cancer, as well as clogged arteries and heart disease. Hookah is an addictive substance and people ingest higher nicotine levels smoking it than they do with cigarettes, which could increase the risk of addiction since nicotine is the drug that causes addiction.

The water pipe of the hookah does not filter out the “bad stuff.” The water-filtration and extended hose do not filter out the nicotine, tar, cancer-causing chemicals or dangerous heavy metals. Smokers who share a water pipe risk contracting infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, and viruses such as hepatitis and herpes from the other smokers. Shared mouthpieces may enhance the opportunity for such diseases to spread.

It seems that most teens have been misguided when it comes to hookah’s negative effects. As more teens become users, it is important that they are informed of what exactly they are smoking.

Despite not knowing much about what they are smoking, many teens are still attracted to Hookah.

“I think kids are attracted to Hookah because it is something they can experiment with. Many may do it just as a social thing, or they may do it just to try something new,” adds school nurse Ms. Rosemarie Desplat.

Obviously the dangers of Hookah smoke can easily be searched up, yet kids continue to be ignorant on the subject matter.

“The inhalation of smoke is just not good for you. It can affect the lining of your mouth and can irritate your throat. It is simply not healthy,” continues Desplat.

Nevertheless, Hookah stays at the top of teens’ Saturday night to-do lists, along with drinking, and other forms of smoking used at parties.

“Hookah is just something to do. Whether its going to a Hookah place, or just going to someone’s house to do it, kids are going to keep doing it. It does matter if they know it’s bad for them,” says a female junior.

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