

HOOKAH, SHISHA, AND WATERPIPE TOBACCO

If you would like to know more about any of these topics or have questions about other commercial tobacco control topics, please contact trdrp@ucop.edu.

- Shisha (or mu'assel) is flavored tobacco smoked in a hookah or waterpipe.
- SB793, which went into effect December 2022, prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco products or tobacco product flavor enhancers in California. The law makes an exception for premium cigars and shisha, (or mu'assel): flavored tobacco smoked in a hookah or waterpipe.
- Smoking hookah is mistakenly believed to be safer than using cigarettes or other tobacco products. Research shows shisha (mu'assel) smoked in a hookah is as harmful as tobacco from cigarettes:
 - Hookah smoke may contain higher concentrations of toxic chemicals than cigarettes, including carbon monoxide.¹
 - Hookah smoke impairs blood vessel function in the heart as much as tobacco smoking.²
 - Lateral smoke from a waterpipe leads to secondhand exposure and is a serious public health concern.³
- Flavored shisha was introduced in the 1990s, and hookah use has since skyrocketed. Studies show a relationship between flavors and hookah use, particularly in women and youth.
 - Past 30-day use of hookah was 16% among college students in one study.⁵
 - Use among young adults went from 7% in 2010-2011 to 12% in 2014-2015 and continues to rise.⁴
- The basis for excluding hookah from SB793, is its purported cultural use among Middle Eastern and North African communities. However, nightclub-like hookah lounges and flavors like red gummy bear or passion kiss do not honor these cultural traditions. Citing bias against a racial or ethnic group as a reason to avoid regulating a product is a strategy employed by the tobacco industry, such as the claim that mentholated tobacco use is part of Black culture.



REFERENCES

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4. Prevalence and Factors Associated with Use of Hookah Tobacco Among Young Adults in the U.S. *Addict Behav*. 2018; 85: 21–25.
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