



What you need to know about...

Dangerous Smoking Alternatives: Bidis, Hookah and Kreteks

What are tobacco alternative to cigarettes?

Many people who smoke often get introduced to tobacco via smoking products that are coined as alternatives to cigarettes. The most commonly used alternatives include bidis, hookahs and kreteks which all consist of fruit and candy flavors and emit perfume-like smells that are less harsh than regular cigarettes.

Are these products dangerous?

Each of these products contain hazardous toxins similar to regular cigarettes and can impose negative health effects such as various types of cancer, bronchitis, lung disease, heart disease and asthma. Despite this fact, bidis, hookahs and kreteks are all falsely marketed as safe and natural smoking alternatives.

Bidis

Bidis are thin, flavored, unfiltered cigarettes imported from India and other parts of South Asia. This smoking alternative consists of shredded tobacco wrapped in tendu leaves and is tied at both ends with string.

Given their lower cost and availability in flavors such as chocolate, vanilla, cherry, licorice, menthol and mango, the use of bidis has become a recent trend among teens in the United States.

Hookah

Hookahs, also called shisha and narghile, are waterpipes, typically made of glass, that are used for smoking flavored tobacco. Originating in Asia and the Middle East,

hookahs work by heating tobacco with burning embers or charcoal and filtering the smoke through a bowl of water. The smoke is then inhaled through a hose and mouthpiece. Hookah tobacco is usually mixed with flavors such as dried fruit, honey or molasses.

Hookah use is just as dangerous as regular cigarette smoking because pipe water does not filter out all the toxins found in tobacco. The smoke produced by a hookah still contains high levels of carbon monoxide, heavy metals and cancer-causing agents.

Kreteks

Kreteks, or clove cigarettes, are imported from Indonesia and made from a mixture of tobacco, cloves and other additives. These cigarettes are known to release a sweet, aromatic smell. Similar to bidis, kreteks are popular among teenagers in the United States and marketed as a healthy alternative to regular cigarettes, despite delivering more nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide. Moreover, they also serve as "gateway" cigarettes as many youth who experiment with smoking clove cigarettes later switch to regular cigarettes. Interestingly, kreteks were once believed to help ease asthma symptoms because they contain cloves.

States such as Utah, Maryland and New Mexico recently passed laws prohibiting the sale of kreteks.