

HEALTH MATTERS

Teens Smoking More Hookah Tobacco

Study suggests dangers are overlooked

A new study indicates that hookah tobacco smoking among Oregon teen-agers is on the rise, due in part to a proliferation of hookah lounges that may be targeting young people with candy- and cocktail-flavored tobacco, online marketing and a party atmosphere.

Officials at the Oregon Public Health Division, which conducted the 2010 Indoor Clean Air Act Compliance Study, worry that the increasing popularity of hookah will reverse gains made during the last decade in the effort to reduce tobacco use among young people.

"The popularity of hookah smoking that we've seen among young people is putting us in a one-step-forward, two-steps-back situation in the battle against tobacco use," said Dr. Katrina Hedberg of the state's Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology.

"We believe teen-agers are turning their attention to hookah because they think it's a glamorous and safe alternative to cigarettes. It's not. Hookah could be creating a whole new culture of young people who get together to smoke tobacco," Hedberg said.

Hookah tobacco — or shisha — is addictive, contains nicotine and can cause lung cancer, heart disease and other complications, just like cigarettes. Burning char-



Hookah lounges that use exotic pipes to burn tobacco are a growing health concern because hookah smoke contains dangerous levels of cancer-causing chemicals and toxic gases.

coal in the pipe creates additional risks, little is known about the health effects of smoking added flavorings.

Hookah pipes produce much more smoke than cigarettes. Hookah smoke contains dangerous levels of cancer-causing chemicals and toxic gases, such as carbon monoxide, posing a health hazard to smokers and lounge employees alike. The study found that the air in hookah lounges ranged from "unhealthy" at best to "hazardous" at worst.

Hookah lounges are required by law to prohibit access by minors younger than 18, but youth interviews and observational studies by Oregon Public Health Division officials indicate minors have little trouble gaining entry.

In addition, many coffee shops and restaurants feature hookah smoking on their patios, and hookahs are increasingly available for purchase. Youth in the study said hookahs are a common fixture at parties and friends' homes.

Diabetics Test Strips Recalled

(AP) -- Abbott Laboratories is recalling up to 359 million testing strips used by diabetics because they can give falsely low blood sugar readings.

The testing strips are used to help diabetes patients check their blood sugar levels. But the Food and Drug Administration says the products being recalled by Abbott can give inaccurately low measurements. As a result, patients may try to raise their blood sugar levels unnecessarily or fail to detect dangerously high

blood sugar levels.

The FDA said the problems are caused by a defect that limits the amount of blood absorbed by each strip.

Abbott is recalling 359 lots marketed under a half-dozen brand names, including: Precision Xceed Pro, Precision Xtra, Medisense Optium, Optium, OptiumEZ and ReliOn Ultima.

Abbott said it will replace the affected test strips at no charge.

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