

Tobacco Products: Unhealthy in Any Form

Tobacco comes in many varieties, from the typical cigarette to the type you can chew. Despite popular belief, using tobacco in any way can have negative effects on your health: there is no safe kind of tobacco product.

Cigarettes

These are the most common forms of tobacco usage. In addition to the already harmful tobacco they contain, cigarettes are

loaded with hundreds of poisonous chemicals. Among these are arsenic (used as a rat poison), ammonia (used as a toilet cleaner), and carbon monoxide (found in car exhaust). Furthermore, many of these substances are known cancer-causing agents. Even non-smokers who breathe in cigarette smoke can be at risk, especially if they're pregnant or have pre-existing health problems.

Cigars

It's widely believed that because cigars are more "pure" or "natural," containing mostly tobacco rather than other harmful substances, they are safer. However, additives to cigars are not regulated or made public, making them just as likely to have the same unhealthy additions as cigarettes.

At any rate, even untouched tobacco poses health risks. In addition to the same effects you get with cigarettes, cigars have higher amounts of tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide, all of which can negatively affect your health. Cigar smokers also have higher rates of mouth, tongue, throat, and



voice box cancer. Cigar smokers are 3 to 5 times more likely to die from lung cancer than non-smokers.

Other Types of Tobacco

Pipes, hookahs, "slims" (little cigars) and other forms of smoking tobacco are often seen as safer or more sophisticated than cigarettes or cigars. But all of these share many of the same adverse health effects: they are not any safer than other methods of smoking tobacco.

Health Effects of Smoking Tobacco

Tobacco smokers are more likely to suffer all sorts of illnesses and conditions, from several forms of cancer (particularly of the heart and lungs), to impotence, infertility, and even increased stress. Compared to non-smokers, smokers are 2 to 4 times more likely to die of coronary heart disease, 2 to 4 times likelier to die by stroke, 23 times more likely to die of lung cancer if male (13 if female), and 12 to 13 times more likely to die from chronic obstructive lung diseases (such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema).

Chewing Tobacco, Dip, and Snuff

Smokeless tobacco can be sniffed, inhaled, or chewed. It contains 28 known cancer-causing agents, and can lead to various oral cancers. It can also lead to tooth decay, gum disease, and even bone loss in the jaw. They are not safer

substitutes to smoking.

No matter what your age and what form of tobacco you're using, quitting is vital to your health and longevity. Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm>

HIGHLIGHTS

There is no safe or healthy form of tobacco. No matter how you prepare or use it, there will always be considerable health risks.

Using tobacco of any kind can lead to numerous health problems, including various kinds of cancer, impotence, infertility, respiratory and cardiovascular problems, and oral disease (such as tooth and gum decay).

The Miami-Dade County Health Department's Tobacco Prevention Program helps to promote tobacco-free lifestyles for both adults and teens.

For more information, call the Office of Community Health & Planning at 305-278-0442.

For more health topics, visit www.dadehealth.org/atoz/atoz.asp