

# How to keep youngsters away from hookah smoking

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*Combating positive perceptions of hookah use as attractive, fun and romantic, rather than focusing on the harmful components of tobacco smoke, could be key to keeping youngsters away from hookah smoking, a study suggests.*

"It was surprising to learn that college students, even when they were aware of the health dangers associated with hookah tobacco smoking at baseline, still went on to use a hookah for the first time," said Jaime Sidani, senior research specialist at the department of medicine at University of Pittsburgh in the US.

"However, students who had less positive attitudes toward hookah smoking were significantly less likely to initiate (hookah tobacco smoking)," Sidani added.

This suggests that countering positive, or popular, attitudes may be at least as effective as emphasising harm in preventing initiation of hookah tobacco smoking.

The researchers analysed a sample of 569 first and second year college students in the US who were surveyed twice over a seven-month period about their attitudes, knowledge and behaviour regarding hookah smoking.

During that time, 13 per cent of the students initiated hookah tobacco use.

The students were more likely to initiate hookah use if they had positive attitudes toward hookah smoking - which is frequently promoted as relaxing, pleasurable, fun and sexual - and if they thought it was a socially acceptable practice among their peers, says the study which appeared in the journal *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.

Hookah tobacco smoking exposes the user to substantial amounts of toxicants such as carbon monoxide, nicotine, carcinogens and tar.

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