

TOBACCO USE AND CESSATION: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (DUBAI)

May 31, 2014

[Overview](#)

[Prevalence of Tobacco Use](#)

[Common Forms of Tobacco Use](#)

[Cost of Tobacco Use](#)

[Tobacco-Related Health Information](#)

[Tobacco Use in the Workplace](#)

[Tobacco Cessation Treatment Options](#)

[Resources](#)

[Citations](#)

Overview

On May 31st 2009, the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day, the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) launched an extensive anti-tobacco educational campaign.¹ The year-long initiative - entitled, Tobacco-free Dubai - Together for a Society Free from Smoking - was divided into five phases.

- Phase One: Training DHA physicians to provide tobacco cessation counseling.¹
- Phase Two: Targeting schools for cessation education campaigns.¹
- Phase Three: Leveraging malls and establishing relationships with organizations to spread anti-tobacco message.¹
- Phase Four: Educating women about the health complications that come with smoking.¹
- Phase Five (slated to begin one year into the program): Revisiting campaign achievements and outlining plans for future national anti-smoking campaigns.¹

Tobacco sales have not been impacted by newly imposed laws taking cigarettes and banning cigarette use at malls and taxed cigarettes.² Part of the reason is poor law enforcement.²

Prevalence of Tobacco Use

The Middle East is considered more tolerant of smoking than other world regions. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), tobacco use is common.* In 2010, 19.5% of the adult population in the UAE smoked.³ A significant majority of smokers are men.⁴ Smoking is particularly prevalent among young people.⁴ Approximately 25% of surveyed students reported having tried tobacco before the age of 10.⁴

Prevalence of Tobacco Smoking in the United Arab Emirates⁵

Adolescent Males (13-15)	21.3%
Adolescent Females (13-15)	9.0%
Adult Males (>=15)	28.1%
Adult Females (>=15)	2.4%

* Data about smoking in the UAE is limited and dated. Publicly reported smoking rates reflect **nationwide** smoking rates. Little information is available about smoking rates in Dubai in specific.

Common Forms of Tobacco Use

In the UAE, smoking using a waterpipe -- aka shisha or hookah - is common. According to a 2005 study of tobacco use patterns of university students in the UAE, 9.4% smoked cigarettes and 5.6% smoked a waterpipe.⁴ Although women comprised only 8.9% of cigarette smokers, they represented 26.2% of waterpipe smokers.⁴

Waterpipes have been used to smoke tobacco by indigenous peoples in Asia and Africa for almost 400 years.⁶ Waterpipes function by using indirect heat and water filtration. Although the specific design of the pipe varies around the world, the device incorporates four parts: a tobacco holder connected by a stem pipe to a water container that is connected to a mouthpiece by a hose. When a smoker inhales on the mouthpiece, he or she creates a vacuum in the water chamber. Smoke from the burning tobacco is drawn into the waterpipe to fill the vacuum. That smoke is cooled by the water for inhalation.⁶

In 2011, the UAE implemented a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes.⁷ Malls continue to sell e-cigarettes with only a few retailers being fined across the country for doing so.⁷

Cost of Tobacco Use

In 2000, the UAE imported 21,900 million cigarettes.⁸ The retail price of a pack of 20 cigarettes was U.S.\$1.43 for domestic brands and U.S.\$1.91 for foreign brands.⁸ Although the government imposes a 100% import duties on cigarettes, they are not historically subject to sales tax.⁸ Ultimately, a combination of government regulation and increased awareness about the dangers of tobacco have translated into a decline in national tobacco sales.⁹

In 2012, the price of tobacco is at AED8 or \$2.2; in summer 2014, the price will increase to AED16.¹⁰ The price increase's goal was to "reduce cardiovascular diseases in the country, and minimize the number of young people buying cigarettes."¹⁰

Tobacco-Related Health Information

Smoking through a waterpipe is not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.¹¹ The smoke that comes through a waterpipe contains nicotine and high levels of toxins, including carbon dioxide and cancer causing chemicals.⁶ A single session of smoking through a waterpipe can expose a person to more smoke over longer periods of time than cigarette smoking.¹² An hour-long session of smoking using a waterpipe is equivalent to smoking 100 or more cigarettes.¹² It produces 70 liters of smoke, translating into 27 to 102 times the carbon tar of a cigarette and 15 to 52 times more carbon monoxide.¹²

According to the limited research available, the adverse health effects of smoking through a waterpipe are similar to those associated with cigarette smoking. They include decreased fertility, esophageal cancer, lung cancer, oral cancer and reduced pulmonary function.¹³

Waterpipe smokers face additional risks that cigarette smokers do not. Sharing waterpipes puts smokers at risk for infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and herpes. They can also experience side effects stemming from common tobacco/waterpipe additives like alcohol or psychoactive drugs.¹¹

According to the Saudi Charitable Society to Combat Smoking, approximately 500 million people are expected to die from cigarette smoking by 2030. "Approximately 70% of these deaths are expected in the Arab world as a result of direct or passive smoking".¹⁴

Tobacco Use in the Workplace

To bring the country in line with the World Health Organization's Framework Convention of Tobacco Control, the UAE has begun regulating tobacco use, content and sales. A key component of this was a complete ban on smoking in government buildings and public places (i.e., libraries).⁹

In Dubai, a broader smoking ban was implemented to prohibit smoking in shopping centers and amusements parks, schools and universities, hair salons, health clubs, internet cafes, food courts, offices, hotels and hotel apartments.⁹ These new regulations permit smoking in some locations in designated smoking rooms.⁹ "A 100% shisha-free environment is not the aim of the Dubai Municipality, according to senior government officials."¹⁵ As opposed to eliminating all smoking opportunities, the focus remains on preventing secondhand smoke exposure. To that end, shisha cafes are required to:

- Move from residential areas.¹⁵
- Arrange for better ventilation.¹⁵
- Designate smoking and non-smoking areas.¹⁵
- Display notices prohibiting entry of those under age 20.¹⁵

Tobacco Cessation Treatment Options

In coordination with Novartis Consumer Health, Dubai's Ministry of Health (MOH) has established two smoking cessation clinics.

- At Al Ittihad Health Center in Jumeria (Phone: 04-3421005)
- In Ras Al Khaima (Phone: 07-2337333)

Patients receive free personalized smoking cessation plans, including medical advice, treatment options, health education and initial general check ups.¹⁶ Additionally, the Emirate government has established a toll free tobacco cessation hotline and made a variety of nicotine replacement therapies available in pharmacies.¹⁷

Resources

- Ministry of Health
Tel: 9712-341444
health@emirates.net.ae
<http://www.moh.gov.ae/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
WHO Post Office, Abdul Razzak al Sanhoury Street

Naser City, Cairo 11371, Egypt
Dr. Fatimah MS El-Awa, Regional Advisor, Tobacco Free Initiative
alawaf@emro.who.org

- [Tobacco Cessation Program of the American Center for Psychiatry and Neurology](#)

Citations

1. Zain AA. Campaign Aims for Tobacco-free Dubai. *Khaleej Times*. 2009.
2. International E. Tobacco in the United Arab Emirates. *Tobacco Country Report*; 2013:54.
3. Risk factors: Tobacco Data by country: Global Health Observatory Data Repository World Health Organization; 2010.
4. Mandil A, Hussein A, Omer H, Turki G, Gaber I. Characteristics and risk factors of tobacco consumption among University of Sharjah students, 2005. *East Mediterr Health J*. Nov-Dec 2007;13(6):1449-1458.
5. *Country Profile: United Arab Emirates*: World Health Organization 2013.
6. WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation (TobReg). *Waterpipe tobacco smoking: Health effects, research needs, and recommended actions by regulators*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2005.
7. Croucher M. E-cigarettes being sold in a Dubai mall despite ban. *The National*. April 16 2014.
8. World Health Organization. *WHO Report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2008 - The MPOWER package*. Geneva, Switzerland 2008.
9. *Tobacco in the United Arab Emirates*: Euromonitor; September 2008.
10. Broomhall E. Dubai gov't to double price of cigarettes. *ArabianBusiness.com*; 2012.
11. Knishkowsky B, Amitai Y. Water-Pipe (Narghile) Smoking: An Emerging Health Risk Behavior. *Pediatrics*. July 1, 2005 2005;116(1):e113-119.
12. Shisha Smoking Is More Harmful Than Cigarettes. *Medical News Today*. Nov 2, 2007; Available at: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/87463.php> Accessed: July 22nd, 2009.
13. *Hookahs*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
14. Ghafour PKA. Smoking caused 13,544 deaths so far this year. *Arab News*. September 6th, 2008; Available at: <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=113893&d=6&m=9&y=2008&pix=kingdom.jpg&category=Kingdom> Accessed: July 22nd 2009.
15. Blanket ban on shisha smoking not on cards *Khaleej Times*. February 6th, 2009.
16. Smoking cessation clinics arrive. *ArabianBusiness.com*. July 1, 2007.
17. World Health Organization. WHO Statistical Information System (WHOSIS); 2009.