

SAMPLING: HOOKAH BARS & VAPING LOUNGES

Background

Hookah and electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are novel tobacco products that are growing in popularity, especially among youth and young adults. Hookah is a water pipe that is used to smoke tobacco, also known as shisha, which is heated using coals or wood burning embers. Shisha is a sticky mixture of tobacco, honey or molasses, and other flavorings such as bubble gum, peanut butter, grape and mint.^{1,2}

E-Cigarettes are battery-operated devices that simulate smoking. They contain cartridges filled with liquid nicotine (derived from tobacco plants), flavorings and other chemicals, often referred to as e-liquid.³

Although selling different tobacco products, e-cigarette (or vaping) lounges and hookah bars function similarly in that they create an inviting, social environment where people can use tobacco indoors for unlimited periods of time.

Hookah bars often sell coffee or alcohol and are becoming increasingly common around colleges and universities.² E-cigarette lounges invest in comfortable furniture and large televisions, where people not only purchase e-cigarettes and e-liquid, but also taste-test and use the product indoors for an unlimited amount of time.

In Minnesota, hookah bars are required to have a tobacco license, but only a few cities have updated their policies to require licenses for e-cigarette shops.

Public Health Concerns

Freedom to Breathe, Minnesota's Clean Indoor Air Act, has an exemption for sampling. Sampling is the practice of allowing customers to try tobacco products in licensed retail tobacco shops. The exemption's intent was to allow customers to briefly sample cigars or bulk tobacco before purchasing. Hookah bars and e-cigarette lounges exploit this exemption by allowing customers to sample tobacco products for long periods of time in a social environment.



Sampling normalizes indoor smoking, e-cigarette use and nicotine addiction. Visible smoking increases adolescent perceptions that smoking is socially acceptable and more common than it actually is.⁴ Hookah smoke and e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and users risk addiction.¹⁻³ These products are often perceived as less harmful than cigarettes, but they pose health risks. A typical 45 minute hookah session is the equivalent of smoking 100-200 cigarettes, and early studies of e-cigarettes are not proven to be safe alternatives to traditional cigarettes.¹⁻³

Many hookah bars and e-cigarette lounges or kiosks are located within malls or have adjoining businesses where secondhand smoke and emissions can become not only a nuisance, but a serious public health issue.



Regulatory Options for Communities



Minnesota cities and counties can pass ordinances more restrictive than the state law – the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act and Freedom to Breathe Act are not preemptive.

Cities and counties can close the indoor sampling loophole by doing both of the following:

- Prohibiting smoking in licensed retail tobacco shops
- Making sure electronic cigarettes are added to the definition of smoking

Sources

- 1 WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation. Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking: Health Effects, Research Needs and Recommended Actions by Regulators. Geneva, Switzerland; 2005. Available from, http://www.who.int/tobacco/global_interaction/tobreg/Waterpipe%20recommendation_Final.pdf
- 2 American Lung Association. Hookah Smoking: A Growing Threat to Public Health Issue Brief. Smokefree Communities Project, 2011. Available from, <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/tobacco-control-advocacy/reports-resources/cessation-economic-benefits/reports/hookah-policy-brief.pdf>
- 3 German Cancer Research Center (Ed.) Electronic Cigarettes – An Overview. Heidelberg, 2013
- 4 Wakefield, M & Forster, J. (2005) Growing Evidence for New Benefit of Clean Indoor Air Laws: Reduced Adolescent Smoking. Tobacco Control, 14, 292-293. Available from, <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/14/5/292.full.pdf+htm>
- 5 "Vaping at the Vapor Loft Vape Lounge in Orange, CA." by Lindsay-Fox is licensed under CC BY 2.0

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON LOCAL POLICY OPTIONS,
CONTACT US AT: NorthlandMN@lung.org

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION
IN MINNESOTA

LETHAL LURE 

[TOBACCO'S HARD SELL]