

Types of tobacco used in some minority ethnic groups

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- **Paan, pan masala, betel quid, areca nuts**
These can be bought or made at home. Lime paste (calcium hydroxide) is smeared onto a betel leaf. The betel leaf is folded into a funnel shape and tobacco, areca nut and other ingredients are added. The top of the funnel is folded over, resulting in a 'quid', which is placed between cheek and teeth for gentle chewing and sucking. Chewing betel-quid can cause a range of cancers even when it is chewed without tobacco.¹
- **Gutkha**
Tobacco and betel nut are mixed together with a variety of ingredients including lime paste (calcium hydroxide), breath fresheners and herbs, flavours and sweeteners. It is often packaged to look like sweets, and doctors in India (which already has 58% of the world's oral cancer cases²) are linking a rise in pre-cancerous lesions in the mouth to gutkha.³
- **Beedies, bidis or biris**
Hand-rolled, flavoured tobacco cigarettes imported from India. They are made by wrapping tobacco flakes in a tendu or temburni leaf, tying them with a coloured string and adding flavours such as chocolate, vanilla, cinnamon, mango, strawberry etc. They are smaller and cheaper than commercial cigarettes but typically have no filter. The leaves used to wrap the tobacco are not porous so smokers have to inhale more often and more deeply to keep the bidi lit. Studies in India have shown that this leads to larger amounts of tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide in the lungs than when a commercial cigarette is smoked, leading to more deeply-seated cancers⁴.
- **Shisha, hookah, waterpipe, nargeela/arghileh/nargile, okka, kalyan, ghelyoon or ghalyan, or hubble-bubble**
The pipe operates by water-filtration and indirect heat. Shisha pipes consist of a flexible tube with a container of water at one end and a mouthpiece at the other. Above the container of water is a bowl with a filter (sometimes just a piece of perforated tinfoil) where charcoal and flavoured tobacco are placed. Drawing on the mouthpiece pulls the smoke down the stem of the tube, through the water, the tube and the

mouthpiece into the lungs. One shisha session lasting approximately 45 minutes may be roughly equivalent to smoking 10 cigarettes; waterpipe smoking more than doubles the risk of lung cancer, respiratory illness and low birth weight, negatively affects lung function and is likely to be a cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); waterpipe products, even the tobacco-free herbal varieties, are not a healthy alternative to smoking cigarettes; shisha smoking (including lit, smoked non-tobacco shisha) may result in exposure to harmful levels of hazardous substances⁵.

Further information

ASH Scotland Tobacco and Inequalities Project – tobacco and minority ethnic communities: www.ashscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/tackle-inequalities/minority-ethnic-communities.aspx

- ASH Scotland information about shisha: www.ashscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/supply-information-about-tobacco-and-health/briefings/shisha.aspx
- Download the resource 'We need to talk about shisha' ASH Scotland developed in partnership with Fast Forward



References

¹ IARC Monographs Programme finds betel-quid and areca-nut chewing carcinogenic to humans. World Health Organisation media release 7 August 2003. www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2003/priarc/en/index.html [Online] [accessed 30.4.08]

² Ibid

³ BBC News, 'Children buy cancerous sweets', 3rd March 1999. Online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/289976.stm> [accessed 30.4.08]

⁴ Gottlieb, N. Indian cigarettes gain popularity but don't let the flavour fool you. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, Vol. 91, No. 21, 1806-1807, November 3, 1999. <http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/91/21/1806> [accessed 30.4.08]

⁵ Smoking shisha, ASH Scotland briefing paper, February 2013. www.ashscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/supply-information-about-tobacco-and-health/briefings/shisha.aspx



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