

# PROTECT BEFORE IT BEGINS.

Educate Early. Prevent Forever.



## A World No Tobacco Day Initiative

by American Oncology Institute

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The numbers behind India's tobacco crisis

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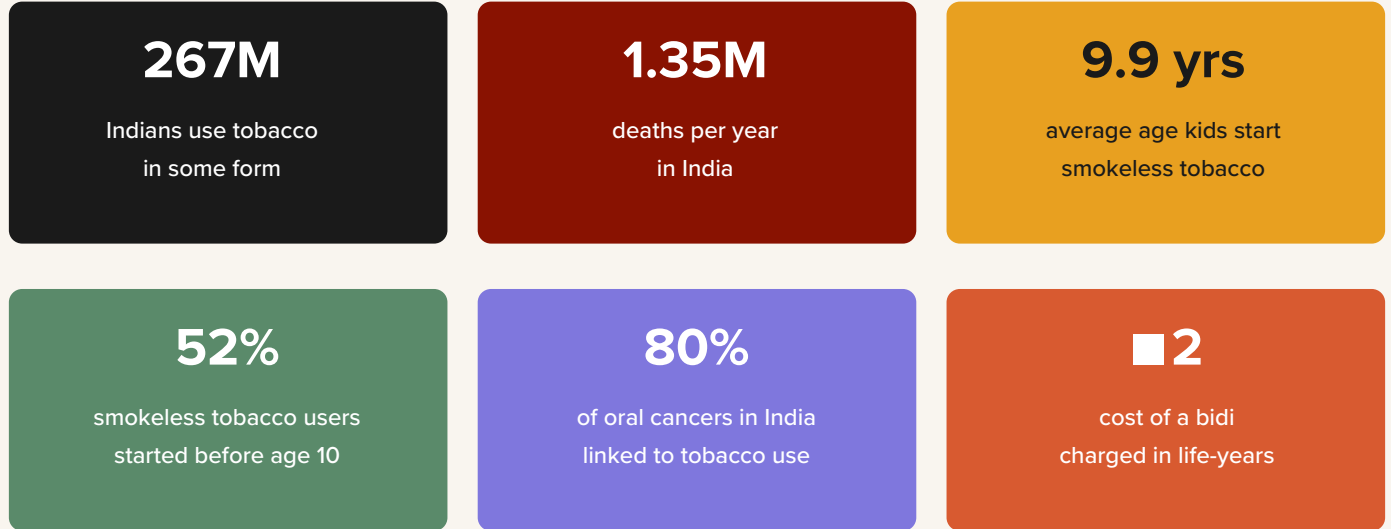
Myths vs facts — quick & easy

# 01 THE NUMBERS

India's tobacco crisis — at a glance

## India's Tobacco Crisis

Six numbers every Indian adult needs to know



### Average Age of First Use in India

Source: Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) 2019



### Forms of Tobacco in India



**The most common tobacco use in India isn't cigarettes.**  
It's gutka, khaini and paan masala — and children encounter them first.

## 02 DID YOU KNOW?

10 tobacco facts that will surprise you

### 10 Facts That Will Change How You See Tobacco

01

A single cigarette takes approximately 11 minutes off your life. A pack a day habit costs 28 days per year.

02

Tobacco kills up to half of its users who don't quit. That's 1 in 2 people.

03

Smokeless tobacco contains over 25 cancer-causing chemicals — more than many people assume.

04

India has 267 million tobacco users — that's more than the entire population of Brazil.

05

A child exposed to secondhand smoke has a higher risk of asthma, ear infections and slow lung development.

06

Chewing tobacco users face up to 7 times higher risk of oral cancer compared to non-users.

07

1.6 million people die from secondhand smoke every year. They never chose tobacco.

08

Quitting tobacco before age 40 can reduce the risk of tobacco-related death by up to 90%.

09

Around 80% of oral cancers in India are linked to tobacco — smoked or chewed.

10

Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure begin to drop.

## 03 FREQUENTLY ASKED

Your questions about tobacco — answered simply

### Questions People Ask

**Q** Is gutka safer than cigarettes because you don't inhale smoke?

**A** No. Gutka and smokeless tobacco are directly linked to oral cancer, throat cancer and oesophageal cancer. Direct contact with mouth tissues makes them highly dangerous.

**Q** Can children get addicted to tobacco?

**A** Yes. Nicotine addiction develops faster in younger brains. Children who try tobacco even once are at significantly higher risk of becoming regular users.

**Q** How quickly does the body start recovering after quitting?

**A** Within 20 minutes, blood pressure drops. Within 12 hours, carbon monoxide levels normalise. Within 3 months, lung function improves. The body starts winning from the first hour.

**Q** Is secondhand smoke dangerous if I smoke outside?

**A** Secondhand smoke lingers on clothing, hair, furniture and car seats — what experts call 'thirdhand smoke'. It still exposes children long after the cigarette is out.

**Q** What is the most effective way to talk to a child about tobacco?

**A** Early, honest and calm. Use real language, not scare tactics. Explain why you personally choose to avoid it. Conversations before age 10 are the most protective.

**Q** Does hookah (shisha) have less tobacco than cigarettes?

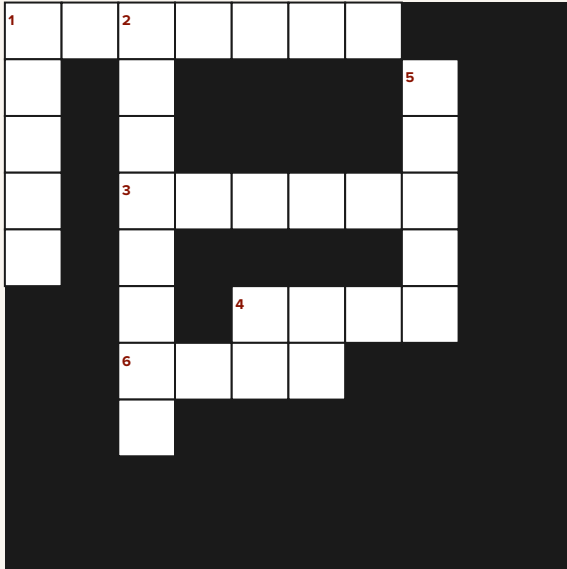
**A** No. One hookah session can deliver the equivalent of 100+ cigarettes of smoke. The water doesn't filter toxins — it just cools them.

# 04 CROSSWORD

Test what you know about tobacco — for teens and adults

## Protect Before It Begins

Fill in the blanks. Answers at the bottom of this page.



### ACROSS

1. A dried plant leaf used in cigarettes and (7) gutka
3. An illness caused by uncontrolled cell (6) growth
4. Organ most damaged by smoking (4)
6. Type of cancer linked to smokeless (4) tobacco

### DOWN

1. A dangerous habit — also a plant (5)
2. The addictive chemical found in all tobacco (8)
5. What you should do with tobacco (4)


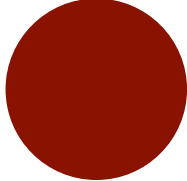

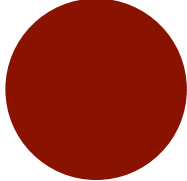
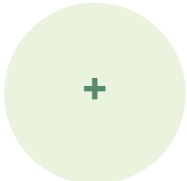
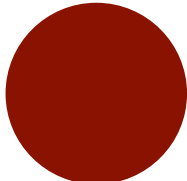

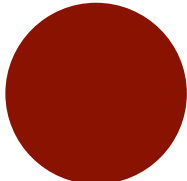
**ANSWERS:** Across: 1-TOBACCO 3-CANCER 4-LUNG 6-ORAL | Down: 1-HABIT 2-NICOTINE 5-QUIT

## 05 KIDS' GAME

For ages 6 to 12 — spot the danger!

### SPOT THE SAFE CHOICE!

Circle the healthy choices below. Put an X on the unhealthy ones.

 <b>An apple</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>A gutka pouch</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>Playing football</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>A cigarette</b> <input type="radio"/>
 <b>Drinking water</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>A bidi</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>Going for a run</b> <input type="radio"/>	 <b>Hookah smoke</b> <input type="radio"/>

**Remember: Healthy choices today build a strong tomorrow!**

If you see someone using tobacco, tell a trusted adult. You could save a life.

### CONNECT THE DOTS — What does a healthy habit look like?

Connect each action to its benefit by drawing a line!

Eat vegetables	-----	Strong muscles
Exercise daily	-----	Sharp mind
Sleep 8 hours	-----	Healthy lungs
Say NO to tobacco	-----	Long happy life

## 06 MYTHS vs FACTS

Quick & clear — the truth about tobacco

### Busted.

Six myths India still believes — and what the truth actually is

#### MYTH

**Hookah is safe because the water filters toxins.**

#### FACT

The water cools the smoke but filters almost no harmful chemicals. One session equals 100+ cigarettes.

#### MYTH

**Gutka isn't tobacco. It's just mouth freshener.**

#### FACT

Gutka contains tobacco and is directly linked to oral cancer, mouth sores and submucous fibrosis.

#### MYTH

**Smoking outside keeps your family safe.**

#### FACT

Toxins cling to clothes and surfaces for hours. Children breathe 'thirdhand smoke' long after you come inside.

#### MYTH

**Only heavy smokers get cancer.**

#### FACT

There is no safe level of tobacco use. Even occasional use significantly raises cancer and heart disease risk.

#### MYTH

**I can quit whenever I want to.**

#### FACT

Nicotine is as addictive as heroin. 70% of smokers want to quit but less than 7% succeed without support.

#### MYTH

**Tobacco relaxes you and reduces stress.**

#### FACT

Nicotine mimics calm but actually raises heart rate and blood pressure. The relief is the addiction talking.

# TAKE THE PLEDGE.

One child. One conversation. One future.

"I will educate at least one child  
about the dangers of tobacco and help  
build a healthier, tobacco-free India."

## EDUCATE

Teach one child  
about tobacco dangers

## EMPOWER

Give them the  
words to say no

## SUPPORT

Back grassroots  
awareness programmes

## PROTECT

Shield the next  
generation

## PREVENT

Disease ends  
where awareness begins



[americanoncology.com](http://americanoncology.com)

#ProtectBeforeItBegins | #WorldNoTobaccoDay | May 31, 2026

Hisar | Jammu | Jalandhar | Ludhiana | Gurugram | Sri Ganganagar | Kota | Aligarh  
Raipur | Imphal | Nagpur | Hyderabad | Vijayawada | Guntur | Coimbatore

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