

Cambodia bans smoking shisha and e-cigarettes

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Cambodia has banned e-cigarettes and shisha pipes saying the increasingly popular products contain damaging levels of nicotine and are leading young people to take up smoking.

The National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) ordered authorities to immediately cease the import, use and sale of shisha tobacco and pipes and e-cigarettes across the country, according to a directive issued to local authorities on Wednesday.

The NACD said that while neither is classified as a drug, they contain high levels of nicotine that "affect the health more seriously than cigarettes".

Cigarettes are widespread in Cambodia but over recent years wealthy, young Cambodian smokers are also turning to shisha lounges especially in the tourist hubs of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Shisha, also known as hookah or hubbly-bubbly, is a Middle-Eastern tradition of smoking flavoured tobacco via pipes and a water bowl.

E-cigarettes—battery-powered devices that simulate smoking by heating and vaporising a liquid solution containing nicotine—have also won a small but growing customer base in the kingdom.

The directive ordered authorities to confiscate shisha tobacco, pipes and e-cigarette paraphernalia, saying [young people](#) are being distracted from

their studies by socialising over a shisha.

The move prompted dismay from businesses serving shisha.

Lem Oudom, manager of The Sands shisha lounge in the capital, said the ban was "unfair" because the fruit-flavoured tobacco does not contain illicit drugs.

But he said he would follow the order and cease selling shisha.

According to a 2005 study by the World Health Organisation (WHO), water pipe smoke contains high concentrations of toxic compounds, including carbon monoxide, heavy metals, cancer-causing chemicals and potentially addictive levels of [nicotine](#).

Smokers also inhale quantities of smoke many times larger and thicker than generated by normal cigarettes.

Research on e-cigarettes is less conclusive.

Supporters claim they are a harmless and valuable tool in helping smokers to quit and could save millions of lives.

But the World Health Organisation has advised against them, saying their potential health risk "remains undetermined".

Sales of electronic cigarettes have surged globally, with [tobacco](#) manufacturers jumping on the trend.

Governments have struggled with how to regulate the product since its emergence.

In October, European lawmakers rejected a bid to classify e-[cigarettes](#) as

medicinal products, which would have restricted their sale to pharmacies.

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