

# City doctors warn women smokers of future hazards

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MUMBAI: The fact that tobacco use may lead to oral and lung cancer, heart [disease](#) and tuberculosis, among others, is well known. However, it may

also cause several reproductive hazards in women, say city doctors.

With an increasing number of women turning to smoking or tobacco use in some form, they stand at a higher risk of these hazards. "Most women start off as young girls when they believe smoking is glamorous," said the director of Salaam Bombay Foundation, Padmini Somani. A study by Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health involved over a thousand pregnant women resident in eight primary health centre areas in the city. Of these, 17% used smokeless tobacco (80% used mishri, others used Gutka, few chewed tobacco with betel quid).

The study also suggests that women who smoke regularly are at a risk of several reproductive hazards like [low birth weight](#), lower gestation periods and higher rate of still borns. Dr P C Gupta, director Healis said, "Birth weight decreases by an average of 100 gms and gestation period by at least six days." He added that anecdotal data suggests that on an average college students and upper-middle class women turned to smoking while in the more traditional segments turned to smokeless tobacco. "While tobacco use is dangerous for both men and women, the risk is higher for women since their reproductive functions are different and are badly affected," Dr Gupta said.

The cessation rates amongst women however are rather encouraging said Dr Surendra Shastri, head of the preventive oncology department at Tata Memorial Hospital. "Of the 16% smokers who opt for counselling and behavioural therapy to [quit smoking](#), 24% are women. On the other hand, almost 50% women opt for cessation involving pharmacotherapy along with counselling and behavioural therapy," he said.

"While smoking women are common in professions like the BPO industry and media, several models smoke to maintain their [ideal weight](#). What they don't realise is how harmful the method is and the risk involved," he said. The largest form of tobacco use in India, he said, was through bidis.

## Youth speak on ways to curb tobacco use

Strong enforcement of the smoking ban seems to be the key to creating a smoke-free public place, said the youth and speakers at the Global Youth Meet on Tobacco Control. While the consensus amongst the delegates was to discourage the portrayal of tobacco use in films, Neena Prasad, the Bloomberg Global Initiative (BGI) to reduce tobacco use said monitoring tobacco use and offering help to [quit smoking](#) was in order. "Awareness amongst youngsters and ban on smoking can go a long way in cutting down consumption. Bans alone can cut down consumption by 6%," said Monica

Arora of Hriday-Shaan, an NGO working towards tobacco control.