

Suicide by Smoking

by Mustafa Madani

Most Muslims are aware of and try to avoid the major sins in Islam - murder, suicide, adultery, alcohol, gambling, usury, etc. Muslims are forbidden to harm themselves or others. Yet millions of Muslims all over the world are doing just that - harming, even killing themselves and their families. Islamic scholars have historically had mixed views on the subject, and the actions of these Muslims have not been unanimously forbidden or even discouraged.

The danger is tobacco use - cigarette and cigar smoking, chew, etc. The mixed views on the subject came about because cigarettes are a more recent invention and did not exist at the time of the revelation of the Quraan in the 7th century A.D. Therefore, one cannot find a verse of Quraan or words of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) saying clearly that "**Cigarette smoking is forbidden.**" However, there are many instances where the Quraan gives us general guidelines, and calls upon us to use our reason and intelligence, and seek guidance from Allah about what is right and wrong. In the Quraan, Allah says, ... **he [the Prophet] commands them what is just, and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good, and prohibits them from what is bad ...**" (Surah al-Araf 7:157). So what are the evils of tobacco use, for your health and for your deen (religion)?

1. Danger to your health

Allah says, "... **make not your own hands contribute to your destruction ...**" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:195,); "... **nor kill yourselves ...**" (Surah al-Nisaa 4:29). It is universally understood that cigarette smoking causes a number of health problems that often ultimately result in death. Men who smoke contract lung cancer at 22 times the rate of non-smokers. Smokers are also highly at risk for heart disease, emphysema, oral cancer, stroke, etc. There are hundreds of poisonous and toxic ingredients in the cigarette itself that the smoker inhales straight into the lungs. In an authentic Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that "**Whomsoever drinks poison, thereby killing himself, will sip this poison forever and ever in the fire of Jahannum (Hell)**". Over 3 million people worldwide die from smoking-related causes each year.

2. Danger to your family's health

In the Quraan, Allah says: "**Those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly bear on themselves a glaring sin**" (Surat al-Ahzaab 33:58). And the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that "**there should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm**. In another Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "**Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbor**". Those around the smoker inhale what is known as "second-hand smoke" - the unfiltered, poisonous waste that goes in the air around the smoker. There are over 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke, over 40 of which are known to cause cancer. Second-hand smoke causes or aggravates asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory problems, especially in children.

3. Addictive

The addiction to tobacco is a physical response that often interferes with one's life and worship. For example, most Muslims are aware that it is forbidden to smoke during the fasting days of Ramadan. Many of these addicted smokers spend their fasting days sleeping, cranky, and short-tempered, just counting the hours until they can have their fix. There have been times when the most severely addicted will wait outside the masjid door for the adhan, and break their fast by lighting up, before taking even food or water.

4. Noxious Smell

Muslims are advised to refrain from eating raw onions and garlic - simply as a courtesy to those around them. Nobody likes the smell. The same goes even more so for the reek of cigarettes, which permeates everything around the smoker - hair, clothing, home, car, etc. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **whoever has eaten from such greens as garlic, onions or leek should keep away from our Masjid**. Many smokers try

to hide the smell by using breath mints or perfume. This does not get rid of the smell, it only masks it. Often the combination of smells is even more nauseating.

5. Waste of Money

Allah says, "... **But spend not wastefully (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the devils** ...", {Surah al-Israa_17:26-27}? And in an authentic Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that: "Allah hates for you three things: gossiping, begging, and wasting money." In the U.S. and other countries, cigarettes are taxed heavily in order to discourage this habit and reimburse the government for the overwhelming health care costs to care for those afflicted with diseases caused by smoking. Smokers often spend thousands of dollars a year that literally just go up in smoke.

Recent Opinions of Scholars

In more recent times, as these dangers of tobacco use have come to be proven beyond any doubt, scholars have become more unanimous in pronouncing tobacco use clearly **Haraam** (forbidden) to believers. They now use the strongest terms to condemn this habit.

How to Quit?

As mentioned, one of the dangers of tobacco is that it is so addicting. It causes a physical response in your body when you try to give it up. Therefore, quitting is often difficult. However, with the help of Allah and the personal commitment to improve yourself for the sake of Allah, and for your own health, it is possible. It is first recommended to make the firm intention, from deep in your heart, to give up this evil habit. Trust in Allah's words: "... **When you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust in Him. If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; if He forsakes you, who is - after that - that can help you? In Allah, then, let believers put their trust**" (Surah Al-Imran 3:159-160).

Secondly, one must avoid situations where you are used to smoking, and people who do so around you. For example, if you have certain friends who gather together and they all constantly smoke - make a choice (Allah gave you free will to choose!) to stay away from that environment for the time being. At a vulnerable stage, it is too easy to get sucked back in by having "just one." Remember, tobacco causes a physical addiction and you must stay away completely. Drink a lot of water and keep yourself busy in other endeavors. Go to the masjid. Play sports. And remember the words of Allah: "**And those who strive hard in Our Cause, We will certainly guide them to Our Paths, for verily Allah is with those who do right**", (Surah al-Ankabut 29:69).

For more information about the proven dangers of smoking, and advice on how to quit, visit About.com's Smoking Cessation website.

Living with a Smoker

If you live with or are friends with smokers, first of all encourage them to quit, for the sake of Allah, their deen, and their health. If they refuse (and ultimately we will face Allah alone), you have the right to protect your own health and the health of your children. Do not allow it in the house. Do not allow it in enclosed quarters with your family. Even if the smoker is a parent, we are not to obey our parents in things, which are forbidden by Allah.

Read **Al-Quraan, the Miracle of Miracles and free from contradictions and errors**

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