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## Smoke Screen

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**T**ODAY, many organisations are striving to lend a helping hand in raising awareness amongst women of matters that influence their health. Healix is one such organisation in Navi Mumbai, which works in collaboration with leading national and international health and research organisations. Sadly, one in ten women smoke or chew tobacco in urban India today. A large cohort study, conducted by Healix, has established and reconfirmed the deleterious effects of tobacco chewing and smoking. The air-pollution at smoking zones is more hazardous to public health than what was recorded at a garbage dumping ground!

**Q What is the status of Indian women as compared to the women in the West as regards**

**tobacco consumption?**

**A** In India, the addiction is mainly due to tobacco chewing and not due to smoking itself. Over 31% of women between ages 15 and 49 use tobacco in some form or another.

**Q What are the ill effects of smoking on women?**

**A** Smoking wrinkles the skin, spoils teeth, causes lung-related problems and infertility. Smoking is highly addictive. In pregnant women, it increases chances of miscarriage, decreases gestation period resulting in still-births.

**Q Is it a fact that women neglect their own health?**

**A** Yes, women do neglect their own health while caring for their kids and husband. Smoking is

definitely increasing as a trend in women. It is very evident in young adolescents, college girls and women working in media, journalism, show-business etc.

**Q What can be done to promote health awareness amongst women as regards smoking?**

**A** smoke-free air regulation, sensitive and anti-tobacco advertising, ban on tobacco marketing, taxing tobacco products heavily and strong graphic health warnings on tobacco packaging. These are some steps that can be taken to bring about awareness on the ill effects of tobacco. Ban on smoking at public places. As a law it needs to be implemented firmly and effectively. Furthermore, smoking inside homes should be banned. This is logical as there are children in homes and they are exposed to passive smoking, that can lead to bronchitis, pneumonia, ear-infection, and asthma attacks. Housewives should take preventive steps.

It is very important to understand that smoking does not signify independence, freedom or liberation. Smoking does not enhance image. On the contrary smoking is only a sign of slavery to tobacco. So it is wise to say NO to tobacco. We must liberate ourselves from its dreadful clutches and enjoy a healthy lifestyle!



# SMOKE SCREEN

Smoking and use of tobacco amongst women is on the rise. Shaili Dhagat spoke to Dr Gupta, the Director of Healix and found out more on tobacco related health problems faced by women.