

How Cigarettes Are Made

An account of basic processes

This method is used primarily by PM and BAW.

Cigarette tobacco is harvested and then cured using direct heat, which increases the amount of tobacco specific nitrosamines (a major cancer causing agent). This method is now used as a convenience and was not developed to cause cancer. It was actually developed by accident and the effect is to make a brighter yellow leaf. Many companies are moving away from this process and introducing more oxygen to the curing process. The Virginia leaf in cigarettes used to be called Bright Leaf, but is now called Virginia Flue Cured or VFC after this old process.

The whole leaf is then processed since the stems within the leaf have more nicotine than the leaf. Stems used to be removed because they are bitter, but are now retained for their high nicotine content.

In order to mask their poor burning qualities and bitter flavor, the stems are masticated along with scrap leaf into a paper pulp, which then has sugars added. Basically the stems are spread throughout the paper to mask its poor burning qualities, and the sugar is used to mask its bitter flavor. A problem here is that burned and inhaled sugar is an addictive substance, which is a factor in why Nicoderm and Nicorette are unsuccessful in helping people quit: there is no sugar withdrawal program. The sugar also accounts for the burning sensation in the throat and larynx associated with some products.

Ammonia is also added to the masticated leaf/stem paper pulp. Ammonia has the effect of raising the PH of the smoke which "frees" the nicotine that is in salt form. Freed nicotine is more readily absorbed by the body in smoke. Alkaloids, like nicotine and cocaine, are more readily absorbed when freed and not in salt form. This is why crackheads smoke "freebased" cocaine.

Ammonia "freebases" nicotine. Yep, you're a cigarette crackhead.

Next licorice and cocoa are added to many popular brands. The reason: to smooth out the flavor. The REAL reason: licorice and cocoa, while approved for use as a food additive, have never been approved for use to be burned and inhaled. What happens when they are burned and inhaled? They act as "bronchodilators" not unlike Primatine Mist, which opens the breathing passages deep in your lungs and gives you that final kick in your nicotine rush. The more surface area of your lungs exposed to the freebased nicotine and sugars, the faster you get your rush. Problem: the more insidious your cancer since it gets in deep where surgery is ineffectual.

We won't even get into the practice of "front loading" or treating the lighted ends of cigarettes to supercharge the initial rush.

This masticated paper pulp is then dried and crumbled, real shredded leaf is added, and your cigarette is rolled. Tobacco content in the tube: 90%

The rolling process involves a hopper of "tobacco," a roll of cigarette paper, a hopper with filters, a roll of filter paper, and glue. Basically, the roll of cigarette paper runs on a sort of conveyor belt where the hopper of tobacco forces the shreds onto the belt just as it rolls over on itself, causing the paper to form a roll with the tobacco in it. Glue is applied along one edge of the paper and a long tube is formed. This tube is very shortly cut into lengths estimating the final tobacco tube on various sized final cigarettes. The filter then goes through a similar process and is banded up against the tobacco tube, glue being applied to two edges of the filter paper, one to seal it on itself, and the other to seal it to the tobacco tube. The finished cigarettes are then hopped and fed into a wrapping mechanism.

The solution: Well, smoking is just not good for you. If you want to quit, get off the sugars first. How? Try an untreated brand, like American Spirit. Once you are off the sugars, then you can get off the nicotine with the patch or gum.