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## Tobacco Use in India: Practices, Patterns and Prevalence

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In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand the magnitude of the problem of tobacco use in India in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. This would require focus on two aspects—the types of tobacco used in India and the actual prevalence of the different types of tobacco used by the population.

In India, tobacco is used in a wide variety of ways: smoking, chewing, applying, sucking, gargling, etc. For each type of tobacco use, a wide range of tobacco products may be available. Some of these products are industrially manufactured on a large scale, some locally on a small scale, some may be prepared by a vendor and some may be prepared by the user himself or herself. Newer imperishable forms of tobacco with areca nut have become very popular and the industry has grown phenomenally within a few decades. *Beedi* smoking is the most popular form of smoking, while cigarettes form a major part of the tobacco industry.

While looking at the prevalence of tobacco use in the population, the pattern among specific subgroups would be of special interest. In almost every study, tobacco use was found to be higher in the lower socioeconomic groups and that aspect has been dealt with in Section 7.6. Subgroups that are dealt with in this chapter are: rural–urban, geographic areas, occupational groups, etc. Many surveys on tobacco use have

been carried out in specific areas—almost everywhere tobacco use is quite prevalent, especially among men. Two specific population groups—youth and women—are given special attention. On the basis of studies that provide

the prevalence of tobacco use for the entire country, the number of tobacco users has been estimated for India. The scientific reasons for the harmful effects of tobacco are briefly discussed in terms of its toxic constituents.