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On the number of mutually touching cylinders

The following problem was posed by Littlewood in 1968. What is the maximum number of congruent infinite circular cylinders that can be arranged in R^3 so that any two of them are touching? Is it 7? It was proved by the author in 2005 that this maximum number is at most 24. The talk will also survey models of mutually touching cylinders and explain the connection of this problem to Gardner's (1959) mathematical puzzle concerning cigarettes.