Menthol

The truth about Menthol and Tobacco

In 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report finding that menthol cigarettes lead to increased smoking initiation among youth and young adults, greater addiction, and decreased success in quitting smoking.

According to FDA's Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC), menthol cigarettes increase the number of children who experiment with cigarettes and the number of children who become regular smokers, increasing overall youth smoking.
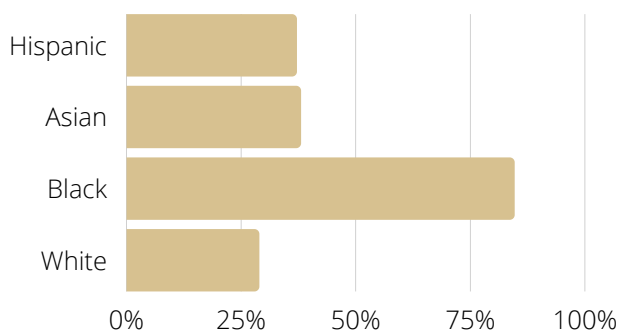
What is Menthol?

Menthol is a minty-flavored substance that gets added to tobacco products in order to mask the harshness while smoking. Menthol is also added to things like lip balm, mouthwash, and candy. Menthol makes it easier to start smoking and harder to quit. While only around 25% of cigarettes sold in the U.S. are labeled as menthol, 90% of all tobacco cigarettes actually contain some menthol.

Nearly 65% of young menthol smokers say they would quit if menthol cigarettes were banned.

Tobacco companies primarily target their advertisements to people of color, minority groups, and youth. Marketing aimed at communities of color led to an increase in menthol use among African Americans. Today close to 90% of African American smokers use menthol products, compared to only 5% in 1950.

Menthol cigarette use among current smokers in the U.S. by race/ethnicity (2012-2014)

Race/ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic	~37%
Asian	~38%
Black	~85%
White	~28%

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Nearly 9 out of 10 African-American smokers aged 12 and older use menthol cigarettes.

A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

The menthol flavoring makes cigarettes easier to inhale, which makes it easier for new tobacco users to start using tobacco products and harder for current tobacco users to quit.

MENTHOL FACTS AND INFORMATION

- Menthol was first added to cigarettes in the 1920s and 1930s, and became widespread in the 1950s and 1960s.

- Menthol cigarettes are as dangerous to an individual's health as non-menthol cigarettes, and menthol cigarette smokers are just as likely to suffer from a tobacco-related disease and/or early death.

- If a menthol cigarette ban had gone into effect in 2011, researchers estimate that more than 320,000 deaths related to smoking would be averted by 2050. Almost a third of those avoided deaths would be among African-Americans.

- Due to targeted marketing efforts by the tobacco industry, menthol cigarette smoking is more prevalent among smokers who are young, female, part of a sexual minority, or part of a racial or ethnic minority.

- Menthol reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke, which may appeal to young, inexperienced smokers.

- Among young adult menthol smokers (aged 18-24) surveyed, 64.6 percent reported that they would quit smoking and not use any other products if menthol cigarettes were banned.

- If menthol cigarettes were banned, 38.9 percent of all menthol smokers and 44.5 percent of African-American menthol smokers surveyed reported that they would try to quit.

- Scientific evidence indicates that adult menthol smokers are less likely than non-menthol smokers to successfully quit smoking despite increased quit attempts. Studies also show significantly lower rates of quitting among African-American and Hispanic menthol smokers compared with non-menthol smokers.

TAKE ACTION

Sign a resolution of support to end the sale of ALL menthol and other flavored tobacco products in Michigan. Visit EndMenthol.org today!

M[END]THOL

RESOURCES

Cdph.ca.gov. (2021). Retrieved 16 July 2021, from https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, December 16). Youth and Tobacco Use. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm.

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