



Fact Sheet: Menthol Cigarettes

Menthol Cigarettes: The History and Addiction

- Menthol is a chemical compound extracted from the peppermint or corn mint plant or created synthetically.ⁱ
- Menthol was first added to cigarettes in the 1920s and 1930s, and became widespread in the 1950s and 1960s.^{ii,iii,iv}
- The 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act's ban on the use of characterizing flavors in cigarettes did not include menthol. There are currently no restrictions on characterizing flavors, including menthol, in other tobacco products, such as little cigars, cigarillos, and smokeless tobacco.^v
- Menthol makes cigarette smoking easier to start and harder to quit, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) scientific analysis of the public health impact of menthol released in July 2013.^{vi}
- Tobacco on its own is already highly addictive because of nicotine. Tobacco companies add chemical additives to cigarettes to make them even more addictive.^{vii} Menthol is one of these additives – even in cigarettes not necessarily labeled menthol.
- Although most cigarettes contain some menthol, certain brands use menthol in greater quantities as a characterizing flavor, and market and advertise those brands as “menthol.”
- Evidence from once-secret tobacco industry documents show that tobacco companies intentionally manipulated menthol levels to appeal to a wide range of smokers, especially young smokers, after having studied smokers' menthol preferences.^{viii,ix,x,xi}
 - Millions of once-secret tobacco industry internal corporate documents were made public in the 1990s during litigation between 46 states and seven major tobacco companies in the United States.
- Adults who smoke menthol cigarettes report shorter time to first cigarette after waking than non-menthol smokers, which is an important measure of nicotine addiction.^{xii,xiii,xiv}
- Studies show that nearly two out of three adult smokers want to quit completely.^{xv} Menthol makes quitting more difficult.



- Evidence from once-secret tobacco industry documents shows that tobacco companies have deliberately targeted youth with menthol cigarette marketing and advertising.^{xvi, xvii, xviii, xix}
- Numerous industry documents also prove that tobacco companies view young people as an important target.^{xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii}
- Menthol reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke due to its cooling effects on the mouth and throat, which appeals to young, inexperienced smokers.^{xxiv, xxv, xxvi}
- Youth cigarette smokers, ages 12 to 17, use menthol at higher rates than adults, even those ages 18 to 25.^{xxvii, xxviii}
- Although the prevalence of non-mentholated cigarettes among youth and young adults declined from 2004 to 2010, the prevalence of menthol cigarettes remained the same among youth and increased among young adults.^{xxix}
- Adolescents' bodies are more sensitive to nicotine, and adolescents are more easily addicted than adults.^{xxx}
- Menthol flavoring contributes to addiction in youth smokers.^{xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii}
- Youth who smoke menthol cigarettes are significantly more likely to show signs of nicotine addiction than those who smoke non-mentholated cigarettes.^{xxxiv, xxxv, xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii}
- Youth tobacco prevention is critical to help end the tobacco epidemic because nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers start smoking by age 18.^{xxxix}
- About 13,100 youth, under age 18, in Florida become new cigarette smokers each year.^{xl} If current trends continue, more than 300,000 Florida children will ultimately die prematurely from their own smoking or from secondhand smoke.³

- Evidence from once-secret tobacco industry documents shows that tobacco companies have disproportionately targeted African-American populations with menthol cigarette advertising and marketing.^{xli,xlii,xliii,xliv}
- Scientific evidence shows that adults who smoke menthol cigarettes are less likely to successfully quit smoking than non-mentholated cigarette smokers, especially among African-American and Hispanic smokers.^{xlv,xlvi,xlvii,xlviii,xlix,i,li,lii,liii}



- Some of the strategies the tobacco industry has used to targeted African-American communities in its advertisements and promotional efforts for menthol cigarettes include:^{liv,lv}
 - Campaigns that use urban culture and language to promote menthol cigarettes
 - Tobacco-sponsored hip-hop bar nights with samples of specialty menthol cigarettes
 - Targeted direct-mail promotions

African-American cigarette smokers are nearly 11 times more likely to use menthol than white smokers.^{lvi}

Smoking's Toll on Society

- Tobacco has killed more than 20 million people prematurely since the first Surgeon General's report in 1964 and still today smoking remains the leading preventable cause of premature disease and death in the U.S.^{lvi}
- Every day, about 1,300 people in the U.S. die because of smoking.
- Smokers die about 10 years earlier than non-smokers.^{lviii}
- For every person who dies this year, there are more than 30 Americans living with a disease caused by smoking.^{lix}
- Menthol cigarettes are no safer than non-mentholated cigarettes.
- Cigarette smoking can cause 16 different types of cancers and can cause lung diseases including COPD, emphysema and bronchitis. Smoking can also cause coronary heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S, and can lead to stroke.^{lx}
- For each smoking-related death, at least two youth or young adults become regular smokers each day.^{lxi}
- Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the U.S., killing 32,300 Floridians each year.^{lxii}

ABOUT TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. Since 2007, more than 126,140 Floridians have successfully quit, using one of these free services. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or



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follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthyFla). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

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