

The Truth About Menthol Cigarettes



Menthol is a flavoring that can be derived naturally from mint plants or synthetically produced.¹ This cool, minty and fresh flavor is often used in products like lip balm, cough medicine, mouth wash, and candy.² Menthol is also used in cigarettes and **makes smoking more appealing to young and beginning smokers.**¹

A Public Health Threat

Easier to Inhale

The menthol flavor in cigarettes **masks the harsh taste of tobacco** and makes the smoke feel smoother and easier to inhale.¹



This **makes it easier for new smokers to start.**¹

Menthol also allows smokers to inhale more deeply, which causes harmful particles to settle **deeper inside the lungs.**²

Harder to Quit

Scientific studies show that the sensory effects and flavor of menthol can **make cigarettes more addictive.**³

Menthol smokers show greater signs of nicotine dependence and are **less likely to successfully quit smoking** than other smokers.^{4,5}



Increasing Menthol Use

Although cigarette use is declining in the U.S., use of menthol cigarettes has increased in recent years, especially among young people and new smokers.⁶

Approximately **19 million** Americans smoke menthol cigarettes, including over 1 million adolescents.⁶

While only 25% of all cigarettes sold in the U.S. are labeled as menthol, **90%** of all tobacco cigarettes actually contain some menthol.^{7,8}

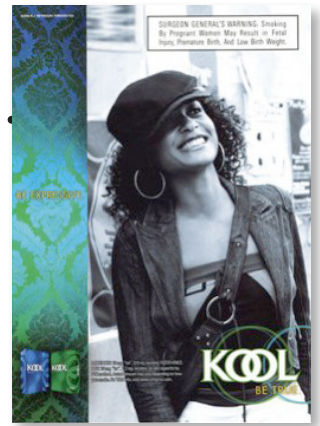


Disproportionate Marketing and Use

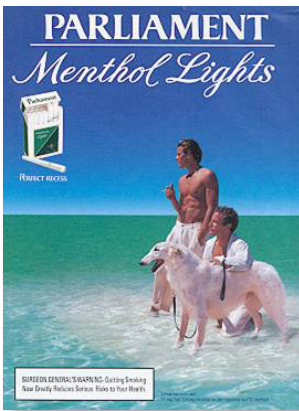
African American Communities

Tobacco industry documents reveal **aggressive menthol tobacco product marketing** and higher rates of discounts and promotions on menthol cigarette brands in African American neighborhoods.⁹

In California, **70%** of African American adult cigarette smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to only 18% of white adult cigarette smokers.¹⁰



LGBTQ Communities*



The tobacco industry has also targeted the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community.

Nearly 50% of all LGB adult cigarette smokers in California smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to only 28% of straight adult cigarette smokers.¹⁰

* Data were not available for people identifying as transgender or queer.



Youth

57% of smokers in the U.S. age 12–17 smoke menthol cigarettes.¹¹

Protecting our Communities

A National study found that **44.5%** of African Americans and **44%** of women would quit smoking if menthol cigarettes were banned.¹²

Prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes is a critical step to preventing a new generation of Californians from becoming addicted to tobacco.



References

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