



Tobacco Talking Points

This document provides talking points for the public about the risks of tobacco for youth and Priority Populations. Talking points about tobacco toxicity, the retail environment, and flavored tobacco products are also included.

Prevalence among Youth

Mint and menthol flavors are very popular among youth and young adults, and local policies are needed restrict the sale of all menthol tobacco products, not just cigarettes.

- In 2018, over half (51.2 percent) of high school students who currently use e-cigarettes are using menthol- or mint-flavored e-cigarette products! This is a 21 percent increase from 2017. (1)
- Among youth and young adult JUUL users 18-21 years old, Cool Mint is the most popular flavor. (2)

Almost 90 percent of teens who ever used hookah, 81 percent of e-cigarette users, 65 percent of cigar smokers, and 50 percent of cigarette smokers said the first tobacco product they used was flavored. (4)

A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that more than two out of every five middle and high school students who smoke reported either using flavored little cigars or flavored cigarettes. (5)

After the FDA banned flavored cigarettes in 2009 there was an increase in the number of adolescents who smoked menthol cigarettes, implying a substitution from flavored cigarettes to menthol cigarettes.(10)





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Prevalence among Priority Populations

Menthol cigarettes are used disproportionately in communities of color. In California, 70 percent of African American, 42 percent of American Indian, 33 percent of Hispanic/Latino, and 30 percent of Asian, adult cigarette smokers smoke menthol cigarettes compared to only 18 percent of white adult cigarette smokers. (12)

Tobacco industry documents reveal aggressive menthol tobacco product marketing in urban, low-income, African American neighborhoods through marketing; such as advertising more desirable menthol promotions; dedicating a greater store display space for menthol products; and allowing more menthol interior and exterior signage in stores. (13) Today, menthol cigarettes are the overwhelming favorite tobacco product among African Americans. A 2015 CDC report found that among current cigarette smokers in the U.S., 70.5 percent of African Americans reported menthol cigarette use; about 20 percentage points higher than whites and Hispanics. (6)

Research has shown that retail menthol advertising is more common in neighborhoods with more Black and lower-income residents. (15)

Toxicity

The Surgeon General noted that some of the flavorings found in e-cigarettes have been shown to cause serious lung disease when inhaled. (16)

The majority of e-liquids (75 percent) contain the chemical Diacetyl, which is linked to bronchiolitis obliterans, also known as popcorn lung, and irreversible lung damage. (9)





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Common flavoring chemicals found in e-cigarette liquids include (18):

- Benzaldehyde: a respiratory irritant that causes death in rabbits exposed to it
- Cinnamaldehyde: found to be toxic to human cells at certain doses
- Diacetyl: associated with a condition called popcorn lung which damages cell lining and scars the lungs
- 2,3-Pentanedione: may also cause popcorn lung

Adolescents who use e-cigarettes have been found to have higher levels of VOC (volatile organic compound) toxicants, compared to non-users. Many VOCs are also carcinogenic, including propylene oxide, acrylamide, acrylonitrile, and crotonaldehyde. (19)

Retail Environment

Tobacco retailers in low income, urban communities offer higher discount rates on mentholated cigarette brands, including between \$1.00 and \$1.50 off per pack or buy one (1) get one (1) free promotions, while more affluent white neighborhoods see discounts on menthols of only about \$0.50 off per pack or buy two (2) get one (1) free offers. (22)

Bright packaging and product placement at the register, near candy, and often at children's eye-level, make tobacco flavored products very visible to kids. (23)

The pack price of Newport Full Flavor (menthol) cigarettes was cheaper in neighborhoods with more Black, youth and lower-income residents. (15)





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Flavors

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Tobacco Control Act) prohibited cigarettes from containing flavors, including candy, fruit, and alcohol flavors. This did not apply to non-cigarette tobacco products and did not include tobacco or menthol flavors. (24)

E-cigarettes are available in over 15,000 flavors, including bubble gum, gummy bear, vanilla bean, cherry crush, and chocolate mint, which make these products very enticing and attractive to children. (25,26)

A study found that high school students, compared to college students, were more likely to experiment with e-cigarettes because of appealing flavors (47 percent compared to 33 percent). (27)

Flavored tobacco products are very enticing to children and even share the same names, packaging, and logos as popular candy brands like Jolly Rancher, Kool-Aid, and Life Savers and gaming systems like Wii and Gameboy. Many of the flavoring chemicals used to flavor "cherry," "grape," "apple," "peach," and "berry" tobacco products are the same ones used to flavor Jolly Rancher candies, Life Savers, Zotz candy, and Kool-Aid drink mix. (28)

As of June 2019, over 30 jurisdictions have passed a flavored tobacco ordinance. A list of CA jurisdictions can be found at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids website:

<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0398.pdf>, or on the landing page: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/fact-sheets/tobaccos-toll-health-harms-and-cost/tobacco-products-and-health-harms-flavored-tobacco-products>





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Flavored tobacco ordinances can vary in multiple ways (29):

- If menthol is included
- The types of products that are included (Cigarettes, other tobacco products, and/or e-cigarettes)
- If it is a complete ban or includes a buffer zone (such as being so far away from youth populated areas)
- If the ordinance takes effective by a certain date or if retailers can be grandfathered
- If there are any exceptions

Targeted Marketing

Tobacco industry documents reveal aggressive menthol tobacco product marketing and higher rates of discounts and promotions on menthol cigarette brands in African American neighborhoods. (13) Similarly, research shows retail menthol advertising was more common in neighborhoods with more Black and lower income residents. (15)

Menthol cigarettes were also developed for and promoted to women. In order to appeal to women, menthol cigarette advertisements often contain images of romantic couples, flowers, and springtime. (30)

Cigar manufacturers use flavors and media channels, for example Facebook, that appeal to youth. In order to appeal to new smokers, little cigar manufacturers also made cigars smaller to appear more cigarette-like, began using flavored filter tips, emphasized mildness, and featured actors using little cigars. (31)





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