

# The Truth About Menthol Cigarettes



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

## 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.<sup>1</sup>



This **makes it easier for new smokers to start.**<sup>1</sup>

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

### Harder to Quit

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

Menthol smokers show greater signs of nicotine dependence and are **less likely to successfully quit smoking** than other smokers.<sup>4,5</sup>



## 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.<sup>6</sup>

Approximately **19 million** Americans smoke menthol cigarettes, including over 1 million adolescents.<sup>6</sup>

While only 25% of all cigarettes sold in the U.S. are labeled as menthol, **90%** of all tobacco cigarettes actually contain some menthol.<sup>7,8</sup>

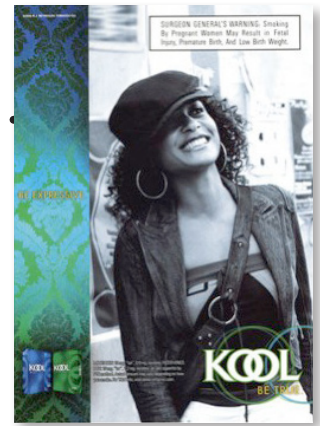


## Disproportionate Marketing and Use

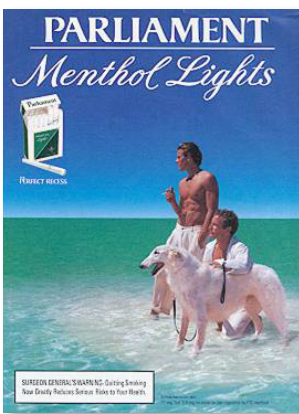
### African American Communities

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

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



### 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.<sup>10</sup>

\* 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.<sup>11</sup>

## 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.<sup>12</sup>

**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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