The Truth About
Menthol Tobacco Products

What Is Menthol?

Menthol is a minty-flavored substance added to tobacco products that hides the harshness of smoking.

Why is menthol a problem?

Menthol cigarettes are just as harmful as non-menthol cigarettes, but the menthol additive **makes it easier for teens to start smoking**. Smoking can cause more than 10 types of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many other diseases.

Menthol gets young people hooked on tobacco.

- Did you know that in recent years **more than half** of youth in NYC who smoked cigarettes usually smoked menthol cigarettes?
- Young people who smoke menthol cigarettes show more signs of being hooked on nicotine than those who smoke nonmenthol cigarettes.

The tobacco industry advertises menthol tobacco products to teens and communities of color.

- Marketing aimed at communities of color contributed to an increase in menthol use among Black people who smoke from **5% in the 1950s to 85% nationally today**. In NYC, 89% of Black adults who smoke and 68% of Latino adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes.
- The tobacco industry designs menthol cigarettes as a **"starter" product** to get young people hooked on tobacco.

How does the tobacco industry sell menthol cigarettes?

- Each year, the biggest tobacco companies in the United States spend nearly **$8 billion** on marketing for all tobacco products. That's almost $1 million an hour!
- More than one out of every three cigarettes sold in the U.S. are menthol cigarettes.

What can communities do?

- Community and faith-based organizations across the country have organized to resist menthol tobacco in their neighborhoods.
- Several cities in the U.S., such as San Francisco and Minneapolis, have passed bans on menthol and other flavored tobacco products or limited the sale of menthol tobacco products near schools and parks.

Contact your local smoke-free advocacy group or email **tobacco@health.nyc.gov** to learn what you can do to fight tobacco in your community.

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