WHAT IS MENTHOL?

- Menthol is a chemical compound extracted from the peppermint or corn mint plant or created synthetically. It reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke due to its characteristic cooling effects on the mouth and throat.\(^1\,^2\)

- Menthol suppresses the coughing reflex\(^3\) which makes inhaling smoke from cigarettes more tolerable.

- Menthol was first added to cigarettes in the 1920s and 1930s, and became widespread in the 1950s and 1960s.\(^1\,^4\,^5\)

- Although most cigarettes contain some menthol, certain brands use menthol in greater quantities making it detectible as a characterizing flavor.\(^6\) Tobacco manufacturers market and advertise those brands as “menthol cigarettes.”

PATTERNS OF USE

- In 2010, 8.2% (20.7 million) of those ages 12 or older in the U.S. used menthol cigarettes.\(^7\)

- Menthol cigarettes are slowing the reductions in overall cigarette smoking prevalence. From 2000 to 2011, the decline in cigarette consumption was greater among non-menthol cigarettes (37% decline) than for menthol cigarettes (20% decline). Eighty-nine percent of the total decline in cigarette consumption is attributed to non-menthol cigarettes.\(^8\)

- Menthol cigarette smoking is more prevalent among youth,\(^9\) female smokers,\(^9\,^11\,^13\) racial/ethnic minorities,\(^9\,^14\,^15\) sexual minorities,\(^15\) and those with mental illness.\(^12\,^16\)

- African American smokers predominantly use menthol cigarettes.\(^9\) Nearly 9 in 10 African American smokers (88.5%) aged 12 years and older use menthol cigarettes.\(^9\)
Youth

Menthol cigarettes are disproportionately used by young smokers and may facilitate addiction.

- Menthol reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke, which may appeal to young, inexperienced smokers.\textsuperscript{1,17,18}

- Longitudinal studies show that initiation with menthol cigarettes facilitates progression to established cigarette use in young smokers.\textsuperscript{19,20}

- Data from nationally representative samples show that from 2008-2010 the youngest age groups among cigarette smokers use menthol at the highest rates (Figure 1).\textsuperscript{9,10}

- In 2014, the prevalence of menthol cigarette use among past 30-day cigarette users was 54.5% among all high school students and 48.4% among all middle school students.\textsuperscript{21}

- Most African American youth smokers smoke menthol cigarettes. From 2008-2010, 94.9% of African American past 30-day smokers used menthol cigarettes. This is compared to 51.3% of White and 60.7% of Asian American past 30-day smokers who smoke menthol cigarettes (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{9}

- A nationally representative study found that among youth and young adults, non-menthol cigarette prevalence declined from 2004 to 2010. By contrast, menthol cigarette prevalence remained constant among youth and increased among young adults over this period.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Prevalence of Use of Menthol Cigarettes among Past 30-Day Smokers by Age in the United States, 2008-2010\textsuperscript{9}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Prevalence of Youth (12-17) Use of Menthol Cigarettes among Past 30-Day Smokers by Race/Ethnicity in the United States, 2008-2010\textsuperscript{9}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.png}
\caption{Smoking Rates Among Young Adult and Youth Smokers From 2004 To 2010}
\end{figure}
Young Adults and Adults

- **Menthol cigarette use is higher in younger adults than older adults.** Among adults surveyed in 2008-2010, past 30-day smokers ages 18-25 had the highest prevalence of menthol cigarette use (45%), compared to adults aged 26-34 (34.7%), adults 35-49 (30.5%), and adults 50+ (30.7%) (Figure 1).9

- From 2008-2010, the prevalence of menthol cigarette use among young adult past 30-day smokers (ages 18-25) was 93.9% among African Americans, compared to 36.3% among Whites and 49.7% among Asian Americans.9

- In 2010, the prevalence of menthol cigarette use among adult past 30-day smokers was 36.3% among LGBT smokers, compared to 29.3% among heterosexual smokers. This difference was even more pronounced among LGBT female smokers (42.9%) compared to heterosexual female smokers (32.4%).15

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Menthol cigarettes offer no health benefit to smokers, and in fact, are more likely to addict youth and are more difficult to quit than regular cigarettes. We agree with the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) that menthol cigarettes pose a threat to public health above and beyond that posed by regular cigarettes.

- Menthol flavoring contributes to addiction in youth smokers.1,22-24

- There are no health benefits associated with using menthol cigarettes compared to non-menthol cigarettes.25

- Menthol cigarettes are at least as dangerous to an individual’s health as non-menthol cigarettes,9 and menthol cigarette smokers are as likely to experience premature morbidity and mortality as smokers of non-menthol cigarettes.26

- Adult menthol smokers report shorter time to first cigarette after waking than non-menthol smokers. Time to first cigarette is an important measure of nicotine addiction.27-29

- The weight of the scientific evidence indicates that adult menthol smokers are less likely than non-menthol smokers to successfully quit smoking24,30-38 despite increased quit intentions25 and quit attempts.32,35,36 Studies show significantly reduced cessation among African American24,30,31 and Hispanic menthol smokers compared to non-menthol smokers.31
MARKETING IN THE U.S.

- Menthol makes up a large portion of the cigarette market in the United States (31% in 2013).  

- The tobacco industry has a well-documented history of developing and marketing mentholated brands to racial and ethnic minorities and youth.  

- Evidence from tobacco industry documents shows that the industry studied smokers’ menthol preferences and manipulated menthol levels to appeal to a variety of smokers, including adolescents and young adults.  

- Evidence from tobacco industry documents also shows that tobacco companies specifically targeted African Americans with menthol cigarette advertising.  

- A recent review found that menthol marketing is higher in publications and venues that appeal to African American audiences.  

- Numerous studies show targeted marketing of menthol cigarettes at the point-of-sale in African American communities throughout the U.S.  

- In 2016, it was reported by the Wall Street Journal that Reynolds American Inc. was distributing packs of Newport cigarettes for $1 per pack at concerts and festivals popular with youth as part of a push to target young adult smokers.
The removal of menthol cigarettes from the market would improve the public health.

The 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Tobacco Control Act) gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate tobacco products. The law prohibits the use of characterizing flavorings in cigarettes, except for menthol. Instead, it gives FDA the regulatory authority to ban menthol. FDA has indicated that it will extend the cigarette flavor ban, excluding menthol, to small cigars, but to date, has not done so.

Thus far, FDA’s activities on menthol include:

- FDA’s Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) was required by the Tobacco Control Act to conduct a review of menthol cigarettes’ effect on youth and other vulnerable populations. TPSAC published its report in March 2011, concluding that “the removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplaces would benefit public health in the United States.”
  - Lorillard (now Reynolds) challenged the integrity of TPSAC in a lawsuit against FDA, alleging that several experts the agency appointed to the committee were biased and therefore must be removed. The judge in the case sided with Lorillard and prohibited FDA from using the TPSAC menthol report.
  - FDA appealed and in January 2016, the D.C. Circuit reversed the district court’s decision, and now the FDA may rely on the TPSAC menthol report to take action to regulate menthol tobacco products.
- In July 2013, FDA published its own report which also concludes that the removal of menthol cigarettes from the market would improve the public health.
- In July 2013, FDA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking additional information to help the agency make informed decisions about menthol in cigarettes. Since that time, FDA has taken no further action on menthol.
State and Local Policies

• While several localities have prohibited flavored tobacco products in some way, most of these exclude menthol, mint or wintergreen.

• However, thus far, two localities have included menthol in their flavor bans. Chicago, Illinois prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, within 500 feet of schools.55 Beginning January 2017, Berkeley, California prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, within 600 feet of schools.56

Effects of Possible Menthol Ban

• A 2012 nationally representative online survey found that one in five Americans agree menthol flavoring in cigarettes should be banned.57

• If menthol cigarettes were banned, 38.9% of all menthol smokers and 44.5% of African American menthol smokers reported that they would try to quit.58

• Among young adult menthol smokers (ages 18-24) 64.6% reported they would quit smoking and not use any other products if menthol cigarettes were banned.59

• If a menthol ban had gone into effect in 2011, researchers estimate conservatively that over 320,000 smoking-attributable deaths would be averted by 2050, almost a third of them among African Americans.60

If menthol cigarettes had been banned in 2011...

African Americans make up almost one third of 320,000+ smoking-attributable deaths that could have been avoided by 2050.
Truth Initiative’s mission is to achieve a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. Consistent with Truth Initiative’s vision of a future where tobacco is a thing of the past, we support the following policies with regard to menthol in tobacco products:

• FDA must issue product standards eliminating menthol as a characterizing flavor from all tobacco products – particularly cigarettes, cigars, little cigars and cigarillos and other combustible tobacco.

• The only exception to this would be for proven harm-minimized products that can show that menthol flavor does help smokers completely switch from combustible tobacco to the harm-minimized product AND that it does not appeal to or attract youth.

• State and local entities should enact policies prohibiting flavors that include menthol, mint and wintergreen flavors.
TRUTH INITIATIVE’S AFFILIATED PUBLICATIONS


MENTHOL CIGARETTES ARE POPULAR WITH TEEN SMOKERS.

54% of current smokers in high school and 48.4% of current smokers in middle school smoked menthols.

MENTHOL SMOKING RATES AMONG TEEN SMOKERS

- **African American**
  - 95%
- **Asian**
  - 61%
- **Hispanic**
  - 58%
- **White**
  - 51%

NEARLY ALL AFRICAN AMERICAN TEEN SMOKERS SMOKE MENTHOLS.

95% of African American teens who are current smokers smoke menthols.

BANNING MENTHOL TOBACCO PRODUCTS COULD SAVE LIVES.

38.9% of all menthol smokers and 44.5% of African American menthol smokers say they would try to quit smoking if menthols were banned.

MENTHOL SMOKERS (↓ 20%)

| Non-Menthol Smokers (↓ 37%) |

IF A BAN ON MENTHOL HAD PASSED IN 2011, IT COULD HAVE SAVED AN ESTIMATED 320,000 LIVES.

- MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2015
- Tobacco Control 2013, 2015
- Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 2014
REFERENCES


