

Sweet Deceit: Protecting Youth from the Lure of Flavored Tobacco

Fact Sheet

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Visit our website to learn more about how to help protect youth from the lure of flavored tobacco.

80% of teenagers who smoke started with **flavored tobacco**

Youth Tobacco Use in Santa Clara County

Despite steep declines in the use of cigarettes among Santa Clara County youth, there has been a rapid increase in the use of other tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes and other electronic/vape device systems. The most recent data show that nearly 1 in 5 youth have ever tried an electronic smoking device and 10% are current users.¹

Flavored Tobacco Products Marketed to Kids

- Tobacco products (little cigars, cigarillos, smokeless tobacco and e-cig/vapor liquid) come in a variety of kid-friendly flavors like cotton-candy, fruit punch, and grape
- Nearly 7 in 10 middle and high school students who have used tobacco have tried flavored products²
- Flavored tobacco is often sold in small packs of 1 or 2 little cigars/cigarillos and at a very low price
- Youth believe that flavored products are safer and less addictive than non-flavored varieties³
- More than 1 in 5 stores in Santa Clara County that sell tobacco are located within 1,000 feet of a school, and 87% of those stores sell flavored tobacco products.⁴

“Since [the 2009 ban on flavored cigarettes], a variety of candy-flavored cigars and cigarillos have proliferated in their place. In the absence of any national regulations, local governments have to act to protect children from this awful marketing ploy.”

-Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County Supervisor

Risks of Flavored Tobacco Products are Real

- Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development
- Flavored little cigar and cigarillo smoke contain the same toxins as regular cigarettes and additional chemicals to create flavors
- Once youth use one tobacco product, they are more likely to experiment with other varieties⁵



Menthol Cigarettes and Targeted Marketing

In 2009, the Food and Drug Administration banned the sale of flavored cigarettes, but made an exclusion for menthol products. Research shows that the tobacco industry has specifically targeted the African American and Black communities in their marketing of menthol products.

- Menthol products are sold at cheaper prices and heavily marketed in lower income urban areas
- Menthol advertising primarily features African American people and culture
- Use of menthol among African American smokers increased from 5% in 1953 to 81% in 2006



Debunking the Myth of Menthol

- Minty flavor masks the harshness of tobacco and makes it easier to tolerate and much harder to quit
- Menthol users take in more nicotine with each draw of smoke
- All cigarettes contain at least trace amounts of menthol
- Menthol products are more popular with “less experienced” smokers in middle and high school
- Menthol cigarette use is found more often in young people of color

1.1 million adolescents in the U.S. use **menthol** tobacco products

National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2004-2008

Santa Clara County Leading the Way to Protect Youth

- In 2010, Santa Clara County became the first western region in the nation to ban the sale of flavored tobacco through its Tobacco Retail Licensing program
- Youth access is also deterred by the County's increase in the minimum age for the purchase of tobacco from 18 to 21
- The License not only prohibits flavored sales, it reduces tobacco advertisement space and restricts the distance of a retailer from a school (1000 feet) and other tobacco retailers (500 feet)
- New York City banned sales of flavored tobacco products in 2010 and it reduced the number of youth reporting ever trying them by 37%⁵

Sources:

1. California Healthy Kids Survey (2013-15)
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MMWR. Sept 30, 2015.
3. Jolly, D.H., 2008. "Exploring the Use of Little Cigars by Students at a Historically Black University." Preventing Chronic Disease 5(3): 1-9.
4. California Department of Public Health Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community Survey (2014)
5. US DHHS, Food and Drug Administration. FDA Parental Advisory on Flavored Tobacco Products -What You Need To Know. 2013.
6. Farley, S.M.; Johns, M. New York City Flavored Tobacco Product Sales Ban Evaluation. Tobacco Control, first published online 12 February 2016.