

# 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 over 10 types of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many other diseases.



### Menthol gets young people hooked on tobacco.

- Did you know that almost **2 out of 3** young smokers in NYC start with menthol or another flavored tobacco product?
- Young menthol cigarette smokers show more signs of being hooked on nicotine than non-menthol cigarette smokers.



### 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 smokers from **5 percent in the 1950s to 84 percent** nationally today. In NYC, 85 percent of Black smokers and 64 percent of Latino smokers 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 more than **\$8 billion** on marketing for all tobacco products. That's \$1 million an hour!
- More than 1 out of every 3 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](mailto:tobacco@health.nyc.gov), to learn what you can do to fight the tobacco industry and break the cycle of tobacco use in your community.