

22 Cancer Groups Urge Biden to Support Ending Sale of Menthol, Flavored Smokes

Ending the sale of menthol in cigarettes and flavors in cigars is key to achieving Cancer Moonshot goals, notably among Black Americans.

December 21, 2023 By American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network joined 21 groups representing millions of cancer patients, survivors and caregivers, to send a letter on December 13 to the White House supporting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration proposed rules to eliminate the sale of menthol in cigarettes and all flavors in cigars. The letter reads in part:

“Saving lives from cancer will take thoughtful public policy and programmatic efforts that leave no one behind. Our community combating cancer works to provide patient services, advance research, and advocate for evidence-based public policies designed to reduce pain and suffering due to cancer and reduce health care disparities. The elimination of menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes is one of the most important public policy actions this administration can take to save lives from cancer and is fully supported by scientific evidence.

“The FDA’s Tobacco Product Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) Report Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations concluded that ‘Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States.’ The FDA’s Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol Versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes and Scientific Review of the Effects of Menthol in Cigarettes on Tobacco Addiction: 1980-2021 concluded that: ‘These findings, combined with the evidence indicating that menthol’s cooling and anesthetic properties can reduce the harshness of cigarette smoke and the evidence indicating that menthol cigarettes are marketed as a smoother alternative to nonmenthol cigarettes, make it likely that menthol cigarettes pose a public health risk above that seen with nonmenthol cigarettes.’

“The FDA’s most recent scientific review¹³ concluded menthol is associated with:

- ‘...positive smoking experiences that contribute to cigarette smoking...

- ...progression to regular cigarette smoking among youth and young adults...
- ...greater dependence in youth.
- ...reduced cessation success among African American smokers...and...likely associated with reduced cessation success among the general population.'

"The consequences of menthol cigarettes and the tobacco industry's targeted marketing have been great, and not fully quantified. One study that looked at how menthol increased the number of people who smoked and died found that from 1980 to 2018, menthol cigarettes were responsible for 10.1 million extra people who smoke, 3 million life years lost and 378,000 premature deaths.¹⁴ Specifically among Black Americans, menthol cigarettes were responsible for 1.5 million new people who smoke, 1.5 million life-years lost, and 157,000 smoking-related premature deaths.¹⁵ To understand this disparity these figures represent, respectively, 15%, 41%, and 50% of the total harm caused by menthol cigarettes while Black Americans comprise 12% of the total U.S. population."

Read the full letter [here](#).

The following is a list of groups that signed the letter: American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Association for Cancer Research, American Lung Association, Association for Clinical Oncology, Association of American Cancer Institutes, Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Free ME from Lung Cancer, GO2 for Lung Cancer, Hope for Stomach Cancer, LiveLung, Lung Cancer Research Foundation, LUNGevity Foundation, Moffitt Cancer Center, National Comprehensive Cancer Network, National LGBT Cancer Network, Oncology Nursing Society, Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition, Prevent Cancer Foundation, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Streak For A Cure, Inc., Upstage Lung Cancer.

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