

Flavored small cigars are popular with kids, study finds

October 22 2013, by Mike Stobbe

Small cigars flavored to taste like candy or fruit are popular among U.S. teens, according to the first government study to gauge their use.

About 1 in 30 middle and high school [kids](#) said they smoke the compact, sweet-flavored cigars. The percentages rise as kids get older, to nearly 1 in 12 [high school seniors](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

The results—based on a 2011 survey of nearly 19,000 students, grades 6 through 12—were published online Tuesday by the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Since 2009, the government has banned cigarettes with candy, fruit and clove flavoring, though it continued to allow menthol flavoring. Only three states have restrictions on the sales of cigars with such flavorings.

The sale of cigarettes and cigars to those under 18 is illegal, but according to an earlier CDC report, about 16 percent of [high school students](#) were smokers in 2011.

Health officials say sweet flavoring can mask the harsh taste of tobacco and make smoking more palatable.

"The so-called small cigars look like cigarettes, addict as much as cigarettes and they kill like cigarettes," said CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden.

Tobacco companies have said they oppose smoking by those under age 18. But the marketing of flavored cigars suggests companies are trying to interest kids in smoking, Frieden and others said.

"The tobacco industry has a long history of using flavored products to attract kids," said Danny McGoldrick, of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy and research organization.

Sales of regular and flavored cigars have boomed in the last 12 years, from 6 billion to more than 13 billion annually, according to calculations by his group.

The CDC survey also asked about menthol-flavored cigarettes. When those were included, more than 40 percent of kids who were current smokers in the survey said they were using flavored cigars or [cigarettes](#).

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Citation: Flavored small cigars are popular with kids, study finds (2013, October 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-flavored-small-cigars-popular-kids.html>

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