

# FDA moves closer to banning menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars

October 17 2023, by Cara Murez



A proposed rule from federal regulators that would ban menthol

cigarettes and flavored cigars has been sent to the White House Office of Management and Budget for final review.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration first announced the [proposed rule](#) in April.

The agency said then that the rule had "the potential to significantly reduce disease and death," reduce "youth experimentation and addiction" and increase the numbers of smokers who quit.

"Once finalized, rules to end the sale of [menthol cigarettes](#) and flavored cigars rule will be the most significant actions that the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products has taken in its 14-year history. The American Lung Association [ALA] is eager for these lifesaving rules to be implemented and urges the White House to finalize these rules before the end of the year," ALA President and CEO Harold Wimmer said in a [statement](#).

"The science and data are clear. Ending the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars will save lives. It will also help reduce the unjust disparities in [tobacco use](#) caused by the [tobacco companies](#) targeting certain communities with menthol cigarettes," Wimmer added.

While numbers of smokers have dropped, those who smoke menthols has increased, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The menthol flavor is appealing to new smokers, making cigarettes more addictive, according to scientists.

It's also been blamed for health disparities in smoking.

About 43% of all adult smokers smoked menthols, but more than 83% of Black smokers did so, according to a 2020 [study](#). Only 30% of white

smokers smoke menthols.

Black people also die at much higher rates from smoking-related illnesses than [white people](#) do, including from stroke, heart disease and lung cancer.

Black patients account for 41% of smoking-related premature deaths and 50% of life-years lost associated with menthol tobacco product use between 1980 and 2018, according to one [study](#). They comprise only 12% of the population. Eliminating menthol cigarettes could end that health disparity.

States have been enacting their own menthol bans, specifically Massachusetts in 2020 and California in 2022, CNN reported.

Meanwhile, tobacco companies have already created a potential workaround to any menthol ban, formulating a synthetic menthol-like cooling agent and then marketing those products to menthol smokers. A [study](#) published last week found that some of these brands are providing even more cooling than actual menthol.

Still, the final rule may incorporate language that addresses that issue, also.

"It's a big deal for them because it is how they attract and sustain people's addiction," Erika Sward, assistant vice president of national advocacy with the ALA, told CNN. "So if this stands, they will have lost a major tool that they've used to addict and sustain an addiction for millions of people."

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [dangers of smoking](#).

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