

# CDC restarts national anti-smoking campaign, with focus on menthols

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has resumed a national campaign that uses the stories of former smokers to warn Americans about the many health dangers of tobacco.

Known as the "Tips From Former Smokers" campaign, seven new people are featured in ads sharing their stories about how cigarette smoking damaged their health.

One tactic is new in this latest round of ads: They take direct aim at the harms of [menthol cigarettes](#), which have become popular among minorities and in marginalized communities.

"Many of this year's new ads include messaging about the harms of [menthol cigarettes](#), which can contribute to tobacco-related health disparities," the agency noted in a [news release](#). "Menthol in cigarettes can make it easier to start smoking and harder to quit."

Tammy W. is one of the former menthol cigarette smokers featured in the campaign. An avid runner, the 50-year-old ate healthy and avoided drugs and alcohol but had a "side hobby" of smoking menthol cigarettes—like many members of her Little Travers Bay Bands of Odawa Indians tribe.

After having chest pains during a daily 10-mile run when she was 44, she went to see her doctor and was told she needed [open-heart surgery](#) immediately. During the operation, she flatlined three times and had a stroke. She has since recovered, but she can no longer run as far.

Tammy quit smoking soon after her surgery.

"Open-heart surgery and the possibility of dying motivated me," she said in the CDC news release. "Life is a gift. I want to stay here as long as I can."

More than 45 former smokers—who were not identified with their last names—share their stories as part of the campaign.

The first iteration of the campaign ran from 2012 to 2018 and prompted 16.4 million smokers to try to quit, 1 million of whom did, CDC [surveys](#) show.

While cigarette smoking has fallen to one of the lowest levels in U.S. history, the proportion of those who smoke menthols has been climbing, [according to the CDC](#).

Young people, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, women, people with low incomes and those with mental health conditions are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than other groups, the agency said.

Why might menthol cigarettes be so appealing?

Menthol masks the taste and smell of tobacco and cools the throat, making it easier to inhale. That enhances the effects of nicotine on the brain and can make cigarettes even more addictive, according to the CDC.

Cigarette smoking kills more than 480,000 Americans every year, and 16 million Americans are living with at least one serious smoking-related disease, CDC [data](#) shows.

Banning menthol cigarettes would save up to 654,000 lives within 40 years, including 255,000 members of the Black community, a 2022 [study](#) found.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is now weighing a [federal ban](#) on menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.

In October, the FDA [sent final rules](#) on banning menthol cigarettes to the White House for review. But things have stalled since it was submitted to

the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

This delay has frustrated anti-tobacco groups, *CNN* reported.

"In an extremely disappointing end to 2023, the White House bowed to tobacco industry pressure and failed to move forward in 2023 with finalizing rules to eliminate menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes and prohibit all characterizing flavors in cigars," the American Lung Association wrote in its annual State of Tobacco Control [report](#). "This lack of action prioritizes politics and tobacco industry profits over public health if the White House fails to finalize the rules."

**More information:** Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [quitting smoking](#).

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