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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Study on Benefits of Banning Menthol Flavored Cigarettes

A new research study conducted by the University of Waterloo in Canada reported that the 2020 European ban on menthol cigarettes made it more likely that menthol smokers would quit smoking, supporting previous Canadian research on the positive public health impact of banning menthol cigarettes. The study was conducted in collaboration with researchers from Maastricht University and the Trimbos Institute in the Netherlands and is the second major national study to provide evidence of the powerful impact of banning menthol cigarettes on quitting, which supports proposed menthol bans in the U.S. and other countries.

The researchers surveyed a national sample of adult smokers of menthol and non-menthol cigarettes in the Netherlands before and after the EU menthol ban. Of the menthol smokers surveyed before and after the ban, 26.1 percent had quit smoking. The quit rate was higher than the control group of non-menthol smokers, of whom only 14.1 per cent had quit. In fact, the increased quit rate of 12 per cent of menthol smokers after the European ban is greater than the increased quit rate of 7.3 per cent found in another study of the menthol ban that was in effect across Canada in 2018.

For decades, tobacco companies have added menthol to cigarettes because it creates a cooling sensation that reduces the harshness of smoke. It makes it easier to start smoking, causing non-smoking youth to be more likely to progress to regular smoking and become addicted to nicotine. Simultaneously over that same time period the World Health Organization (WHO) and many other public health authorities have called on governments to ban menthol in cigarettes to reduce smoking, which kills 7.1 million smokers and 1.2 million non-smokers from second-hand smoke per year worldwide. The global tobacco control treaty, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, calls upon countries to prohibit or restrict menthol and other additives that make smoking easier.

To date, 35 countries have banned menthol cigarettes. On April 28, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a proposed rule to ban menthol in cigarettes and cigars. An earlier study published that day on the impact of the Canadian ban projected that a ban on menthol cigarettes in the U.S. would lead more than 1.3 million smokers to quit. The study also found that one-third of menthol smokers reported continuing to smoke menthol cigarettes even after the ban. The tobacco industry markets a wide range of accessories to enable people to add menthol flavoring to tobacco products themselves.

These tobacco industry actions undermine the effectiveness of the menthol ban. By tightening the regulations to include these menthol add-ons, the impact of the menthol ban on quitting could be even greater, says researchers.

The American Lung Association has urged FDA to remove all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, for more than decade and welcome the agencies recent proposal/announcement as an important step to address tobacco-related health disparities.

Menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars are a potent source of youth addiction with close to half of all kids starting to smoke with menthol cigarettes. Further for generations, the tobacco industry has intentionally targeted Black and other communities with marketing of menthol cigarettes, resulting in more tobacco-related death and disease as well as tobacco-related health disparities. In fact, 82% of Black individuals who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

Menthol enhances the effects of nicotine on the brain and can make tobacco products even more addictive. Youths with developing brains are even more vulnerable to nicotine. In recent years, tobacco companies have also increased the amount of nicotine in some menthol cigarettes. Menthol in cigarettes can make it more difficult to quit smoking. Half of youth (ages 12-17) who had ever tried smoking initiated with menthol cigarettes. In a survey conducted in 2021, 41.1% of high school smokers reported using menthol cigarettes. The popularity of menthol-flavored cigarettes is also evidenced by brand preference among youth. According to data from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, one in five smokers ages 12-17 prefers Newport cigarettes, a heavily marketed menthol cigarette brand. Preference for Newport is even higher among African American youth smokers (69.1%) because of targeted marketing by the tobacco industry.

To learn about the dangers of secondhand smoke, or for help Quitting the Nicotine Addiction please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org.

The New York State Smokers' Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco and the service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit them at: <https://www.nysmokefree.com/>.for Quit Help.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about tobacco use and vaping seeking to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [ww.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.