



Menthol cigarettes and the LGBTQ+ community

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
~~Cancer Center~~

Making Cancer History®

What is menthol?

- Menthol is mint flavoring that can be taken from peppermint plants or made in a lab.
- Adding menthol to cigarettes creates a “cooling” effect that makes inhaling smoke easier.

Did you know?

- Menthol cigarette use is higher in LGBTQ+ communities.
 - For adults, 36% of LGBTQ+ smokers report smoking menthol cigarettes, compared to 29% of heterosexual and cisgender smokers.

Why are menthol cigarettes more common in LGBTQ+ communities?

- Tobacco companies intentionally and aggressively target LGBTQ+ communities to sway them toward menthol cigarettes.
- People in LGBTQ+ communities start smoking when they are younger.
 - Menthol cigarettes are more commonly used by younger smokers.
- People in LGBTQ+ communities have high rates of mental health concerns like depression and anxiety due to experiences such as identity-based discrimination, family rejection, harassment and fear of violence.
 - Menthol cigarettes are more commonly used by people with mental health concerns.

The myths & the facts

- ✘ Menthol cigarettes are less harmful than other types of tobacco products.
- ✔ Menthol cigarettes can lead to deeper inhalation of tobacco smoke and higher risk of respiratory diseases, lung cancer and heart issues.

- ✘ Menthol cigarettes are easier to quit than other types of tobacco products.
- ✔ The cooling effect of menthol can make cigarettes more addictive and harder to quit.

- ✘ LGBTQ+ individuals naturally prefer menthol cigarettes.
- ✔ The higher use of menthol cigarettes in LGBTQ+ communities is strongly influenced by targeted marketing from tobacco companies.

- ✘ There is no reason to ban menthol products.
- ✔ In 2022, the Food and Drug Administration **proposed** a ban on selling menthol tobacco products, which would help to protect the health of marginalized groups.

Quitting menthol cigarettes is hard but it's one of the best things you can do for your health.

Smoking non-menthol cigarettes is not a healthier alternative.

Ready to start your smoke-free journey?



How to get help:

- Visit [Cancer-Network.org/Outlast-Tobacco](https://www.cancer-network.org/Outlast-Tobacco) for more information.
- Call 1-800-784-8669 for your state's tobacco Quitline.
- Text QUIT to 47848 for a smoke-free texting program.
- Visit [LGBTQHealthCareDirectory.Org](https://www.LGBTQHealthCareDirectory.Org) to find LGBTQ+-friendly healthcare near you.