

# Menthol

Menthol is a flavor added to cigarettes and other tobacco products.<sup>17</sup> Menthol has a minty taste that masks the harshness of tobacco through the cooling and numbing sensation it provides.<sup>18</sup>

Studies show that people who smoke menthol cigarettes have a higher level of nicotine addiction.<sup>19</sup> Menthol users have a harder time quitting smoking than users of non-menthol products.<sup>20</sup>

Tobacco industry documents show efforts to market menthol products to African Americans, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, and young people.<sup>21, 22</sup> This has resulted in higher usage of these products in these communities.<sup>18</sup>

Despite conclusive evidence that menthol cigarettes are particularly harmful, the FDA continues to exempt menthol from the ban on flavored cigarettes. If menthol were banned in the United States, 39 percent of menthol smokers, including 47 percent of African American menthol smokers, would quit smoking.<sup>23</sup>

## **Menthol Facts:**

- More than one million youth in the United States smoke menthol cigarettes, a higher rate than any other age group.<sup>24</sup>
- 70 percent of LGBTQ youth smokers smoke menthols.<sup>25</sup>
- About half of Minnesota teen smokers – 44 percent – smoke menthol cigarettes.<sup>26</sup>
- 25 percent of Minnesota adult smokers smoke menthols.<sup>27</sup>
- 88 percent of adult African American smokers smoke menthols, compared to 26 percent of adult white smokers.<sup>28</sup>
- 83 percent of African American youth smokers smoke menthols<sup>25</sup>