



Don't let the "cool" make you a fool.

Did you know?

The first menthol cigarette was introduced to the market in 1924.

Menthol is a pungent organic compound derived from mint oils or synthesized mint oil.

Menthol cigarettes make up more than one-fourth of the \$70 billion U.S. cigarette market.

In one study, flavor preference was noticeably higher among African American smokers: 56% would not smoke a non-menthol cigarette if menthols were unavailable, as opposed to 28% of white participants.

Critics say menthol cigarette use by African Americans has been reinforced by decades of advertising aimed at these consumers.

Menthol Cigarettes: More Dangerous?

Even though African Americans smoke fewer cigarettes per day than white smokers, they are at a higher risk for lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Menthol cigarettes may be one of the reasons why. Menthol cigarettes make up for a little more than 25% of the cigarettes sold in the United States each year. Yet more than 70% of African American smokers use menthol cigarettes, compared to only 30% of white smokers.

Menthol smokers are less likely to quit smoking. The longer you smoke, the more damage to your body. So anything that increases the length of time you smoke, including menthol cigarettes, puts you at greater risk for smoking-related illness or death.

Black male smokers are at more than a 30% greater risk for tobacco-related lung cancer than white male smokers. Between 1992 and 1998, 54.7 of 100,000 Caucasians developed lung cancer. During the same time, 71.6 of 100,000 African Americans developed lung cancer.

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2435)
Website: www.cancer.org

American Lung Association
1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-548-8252)
Website: www.lungusa.org

Smokefree.gov
(Info on state phone-based quitting programs)
1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669)
www.smokefree.gov

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MENTHOL cigarettes



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But why are menthol cigarettes more difficult to quit?

The nicotine in cigarette smoke is highly addictive, just like heroin or cocaine. Smoking is actually the most common form of drug addiction in the United States. Both menthol and non-menthol cigarettes contain nicotine.

But menthol cigarettes often don't seem as harsh as regular cigarettes. The menthol produces a "cooling" feeling in the mouth, throat, and lungs. There is actually more irritation caused by menthol, but because you get a feeling of coolness when you smoke menthol, you're more likely to inhale deeper and hold the smoke longer. That means more toxins in your body, including nicotine, making menthol cigarettes potentially more addictive than non-menthol.

Menthol lets you smoke without as much discomfort while doing just as much, and sometimes more, damage. You may even feel like you are breathing easier. Menthol stops the urge to cough; that's why we use menthol lozenges when we have a cold. It produces a slightly "numbing" feeling. But the menthol only makes you "feel" less irritated by the smoke. It's still irritating and drying your mouth, throat, and lungs.

Your body begins to repair itself within minutes of your last cigarette.

A study by a group of Harvard researchers found that even though African Americans smoked less than whites, they had higher levels of **cotinine** in their saliva. Cotinine is a chemical your body produces from the nicotine in cigarettes. Higher levels of cotinine can mean higher levels of toxins. The highest level of cotinine for each cigarette smoked was for African American menthol smokers. More toxins can lead to higher risk of lung cancer and other smoke-related illnesses.

How to Quit

First off, realize it's never too late to quit. Your body begins to repair itself within minutes of your last cigarette. Quitting smoking isn't easy, and it often takes more than one try before smokers are successful. There are lots of different ways to quit. If you use two or more methods at once, your chances of quitting are better.

Some researchers suggest switching from menthol to non-menthol cigarettes to help you quit, but remember that all cigarettes are bad for your health and addictive. Pick a quit date and enlist the support of friends and family.

Here are just some of the things you can do to deal with the physical and mental addictions of cigarette smoking:



Physical Addiction

Nicotine replacement. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms lead many quitters back to smoking. These are patches, gums, inhalers, nasal sprays or lozenges containing nicotine that help you wean yourself off of cigarettes without the withdrawal symptoms. They are meant to be used for a limited time, usually not more than six months, and are best used when first quitting.

Medication. One FDA-approved medication for smoking cessation is **bupropion** (Zyban® or Wellbutrin®). This antidepressant affects chemicals in the brain related to nicotine craving. You will need a prescription for bupropion and will need to start taking it daily, one to two weeks before you quit, and continue as long as your doctor considers it appropriate.

A newer medicine, **varenicline** (Chantix®) makes nicotine less enjoyable, helping to reduce withdrawal symptoms. Varenicline is taken as a pill, twice a day, starting at least a week before your quit date. There are additional medications your doctor can prescribe, so talk to him or her about which option might be best for you.

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Mental Addiction

Just as cigarette smoking is physically addictive, it can also be mentally and emotionally addictive. Many quitters find the support of family and friends necessary to help them stop smoking. This can be anyone who encourages you in your efforts—a spouse, co-worker, or family doctor. Another helpful tool is **Nicotine Anonymous**. It is a free and open support group that offers a long-term approach to quitting.

All states also have some type of free telephone-based program to help you quit. These trained counselors can help you determine the best plan for you to quit. Smokers using telephone counseling are twice as likely to quit as those who don't. It's free, doesn't require transportation or childcare, and is also available on nights and weekends.

Don't Be Discouraged

Most smokers don't succeed on the first try. But don't let that stop you. Just try again and use a different method or technique, until you find the one that works for you. Use the resources available, and live a healthier, smoke-free life.

