

# TOBACCO IS CHANGING

## See How Menthol Damages Vulnerable Communities

Tobacco companies have aggressively marketed highly addictive menthol products to low income and racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods for decades. Their targeted tactics have made menthol an urgent public health and social justice issue for Missouri's vulnerable populations, including Black Americans, LGBTQ+ people, youth, people living in poverty, and others.

### 10 Reasons Why Menthol is a Social Justice Issue

#### 1. Tobacco companies spend millions to hook people of color.

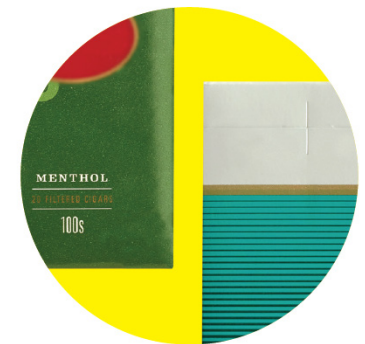
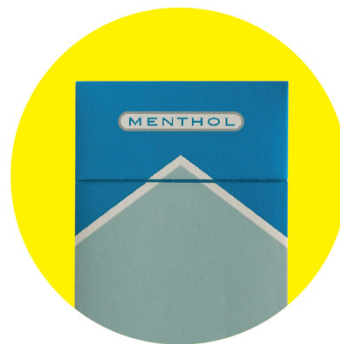
Kids of color and their families are exposed to two to three times the usual number of cigarette ads, especially for menthol products.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Tobacco companies flood vulnerable communities with their products and marketing tactics.

The tobacco industry targets menthol cigarette marketing to certain populations through advertisements, giveaways, lower prices, lifestyle branding, and event sponsorships. Evidence from tobacco industry documents shows that the industry studied smokers' menthol preferences and manipulated menthol levels to appeal to a variety of smokers, including adolescents and young adults.<sup>2</sup>

#### 3. Vulnerable communities are surrounded by tobacco advertising.

Tobacco companies aggressively market menthol-flavored tobacco products to different groups of people, especially Black people. This marketing contributes to targeted population groups being more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than other population groups.<sup>3</sup>



#### 4. Tobacco retailers are located close to Missouri's most vulnerable kids.

In Missouri, tobacco retailers are more likely to sell products closer to playgrounds and schools in low-income communities than in more affluent neighborhoods.

#### 5. Tobacco companies exploit other cultures.

Their ads appeal to ethnic pride and the shared experiences of people of color and others. They even sponsor cultural celebrations for Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo, and Pride Fest.

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> [www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0208.pdf](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0208.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/menthol/public-health-problem.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/menthol/public-health-problem.html)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/menthol/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/menthol/index.html)

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## 6. More Black youth are addicted to menthol tobacco.

Nationally, over half of African American and Hispanic high school and middle school students who report use menthol cigarettes, compared to 42.8% of non-Hispanic White youth.<sup>4</sup>

## 7. Menthol is more addictive and keeps users hooked.

Research shows that menthol actually makes tobacco products easier to use and harder to quit. Menthol smokers report shorter periods between cigarettes. They also try to quit smoking more often and are less likely to be successful.<sup>5</sup>

## 8. Menthol tobacco use has a strong connection to mental health symptoms.

Tobacco users who currently use menthol-flavored tobacco products report anxiety and depression at higher rates than non-menthol tobacco users and are used by more than half of individuals with substance use disorders.<sup>6</sup>

### Sources:

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/menthol/related-health-disparities.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/menthol/related-health-disparities.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.fda.gov/media/92673/download](https://www.fda.gov/media/92673/download)

<sup>6</sup> <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/menthol-facts-stats-and-regulations#:~:text=Young%20people%20who%20vape%20fruit,a%202021%20Truth%20Initiative%20study>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/cessation-fact-sheet>

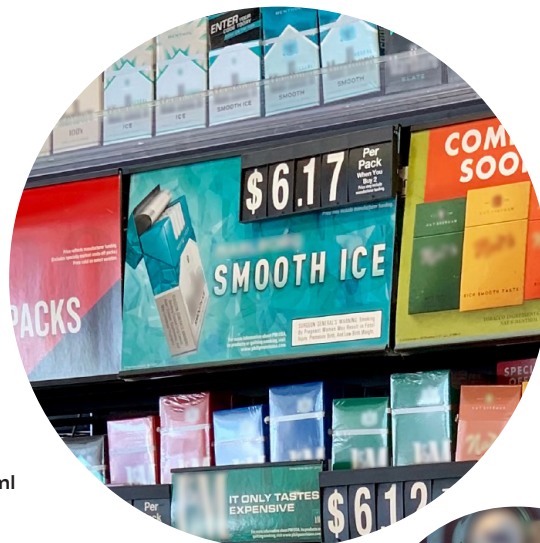
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-commits-evidence-based-actions-aimed-saving-lives-and-preventing-future-generations-smokers>

## 9. Menthol cigarettes have created a heritage of illness.

Menthol cigarettes expose the body to poisons and nearly 70 known cancer causers. The serious health effects are spreading from one generation to the next in communities of color.<sup>7</sup>

## 10. Menthol products end a disproportionate number of Black lives.

Research shows a menthol ban could save as many as 633,000 American lives - including 237,000 Black lives by 2050.<sup>8</sup>



## What Can You Do?

### Support Tobacco Flavor Restrictions that Include Menthol

Menthol is often deliberately left out of restrictions that govern the flavored tobacco products that tempt kids. You can help change that. Visit [TobaccosChangingMO.org](https://TobaccosChangingMO.org) to connect with a local coalition and find out how you can support comprehensive tobacco policies in Missouri.

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to learn more.



Learn more about the manipulative tobacco tactics affecting our communities at [TobaccosChangingMO.org](https://TobaccosChangingMO.org).



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