



WASHINGTON
BREATHES

washingtonbreathes.org

Menthol and Nicotine Cessation

Mentholated tobacco products make it easier to start and harder to quit.

THE PROBLEM

MENTHOL is a chemical additive in many cigarettes and e-cigarettes that makes it easier to start smoking or vaping and harder to quit.



Menthol makes it easier to start using nicotine products. It reduces the harshness of smoking or vaping by creating a cooling effect on the mouth and throat.



Menthol suppresses the cough reflex. People who smoke and vape can inhale more deeply, drawing in more nicotine and more toxic chemicals from the product.



Menthol enhances the addictiveness of nicotine. Menthol interacts with the same brain receptors that nicotine does. Menthol increases the number of nicotine receptors in the brain and increases the intensity of nicotine withdrawal.

THE SOLUTION



Prohibit the sale of menthol and all flavored commercial tobacco or nicotine products.

Support people who use nicotine products by improving access to equitable cessation services.

Massachusetts, California, and over 180 U.S. municipalities already prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products.

About **100,000** Washingtonians who smoke use **menthol cigarettes**.

Most people who smoke are trying to quit, but menthol makes it harder.

Banning menthol cigarettes NOW would save up to 654,000 American lives including the lives of 255,000 Black Americans.

THE INDUSTRY MANIPULATES WITH MENTHOL

Industry targeting has included:

- Disproportionate advertising of menthol products to people of color and people with lower incomes.
- Higher density of tobacco retailers in communities of color than in white neighborhoods.
- Lower-priced products at retail locations in areas with higher proportions of people of color.
- Sponsoring cultural events like Pride, hip hop concerts, jazz festivals, and more.

85% of Black people who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

50% of teens who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

Menthol cigarette use is also higher among people who are American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Latine, LGBTQ, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, women, those with lower incomes, and those with mental health conditions.

Studies show people who use menthol cigarettes need more attempts to quit.



7,400 additional adults in Washington who smoke would quit if menthol cigarettes were no longer available.



TESTIMONY

"I started smoking regular filtered cigarettes but switched to menthols because it was more enjoyable and easier 'drag'. The more enjoyable it was, the harder I found it to quit. That nicotine/menthol mix really got me hooked."

-Keith, Skagit County

RESOURCES

[Eliminate Flavors webpage](https://www.waflavors.org/) bit.ly/WaFlavors

[Cessation/Quitting Support Services](https://www.waquit.org/) bit.ly/WaQuit

[Why we call it commercial tobacco](https://www.wacommercial.org/) bit.ly/WaCommercial

[Fact sheet data sources](https://www.wamenthol.org/) bit.ly/WaMentholDataSources



Washington Breathes is a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals working to eliminate the harms of commercial tobacco use.

This fact sheet was developed by the coalition's Improving Cessation Treatment Workgroup and approved by the Steering Committee.

[washingtonbreathes.org](https://www.washingtonbreathes.org)