

FACT SHEET

Flavored Tobacco Products



Flavored tobacco products have become increasingly common in the United States. These products, containing flavors like vanilla, orange, chocolate, cherry and coffee, are especially attractive to youth. They are widely considered to be “starter” products, establishing smoking habits that can lead to a lifetime of addiction. Like all tobacco products, flavored tobacco products have serious health risks and are not considered safe by the FDA.

Youth Data

- In 2004, 22.8% of 17-year-old smokers reported using flavored cigarettes over the past month, as compared to 6.7% of smokers over the age of 25.¹
- A poll conducted in March 2008 found that one in five youngsters between the ages of 12 and 17 had seen flavored tobacco products or ads, while only one in 10 adults reported having seen them.²
- According to one study of youth smokers between the ages of 13 and 18, 52% of smokers who had heard of flavored cigarettes reported interest in trying them, and nearly 60% thought that flavored cigarettes would taste better than regular cigarettes.³
- Studies of youth expectations around other flavored tobacco products like bidis and hookahs have found that young smokers report choosing flavored products over cigarettes because they “taste better” and are perceived to be “safer.”^{4,5}

Tobacco Company Marketing

- Industry documents have previously revealed clear patterns of designing flavored cigarettes to target youth.
- Advisors to one company developed concepts for a “youth cigarette,” including cola and apple flavors, and a “sweet flavor cigarette,” stating, “It’s a well-known fact that teenagers like sweet products. Honey might be considered.”⁶
- A memo from another company instructed workers to “make a cigarette which is obviously youth oriented. This could involve cigarette name, blend, flavor and marketing technique.... for example, a flavor which would be candy-like but give the satisfaction of a cigarette.”⁷
- Other internal documents describe sweetened products as “...for younger people, beginner cigarette smokers, teenagers . . . when you feel like a light smoke, want to be reminded of bubblegum.”⁸

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Health Effects

- All tobacco products, including flavored products, are addictive and carry serious health risks.
- An estimated 443,000 Americans die prematurely each year due to smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke.⁹
- More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides and murders combined.¹⁰
- Cigarette smoking causes many types of cancer, as well as heart disease and chronic lung diseases like emphysema. Smokeless tobacco products cause gum disease and cancers of the mouth.^{11,12}

Under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, the sale of cigarettes containing certain characterizing flavors other than menthol will be illegal as of September 22, 2009. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is currently examining options for regulating both menthol cigarettes and flavored tobacco products other than cigarettes.

¹ Klein SM, Giovino GA, Barker DC, Tworek C, Cummings KM, O'Connor RJ. Use of flavored cigarettes among older adolescent and adult smokers: United States, 2004-2005. *Nicotine Tob Res.* 2008;10(7):1209-14.

² National telephone survey of teens aged 12 to 17 and adults conducted by International Communications Research (ICR), March 2008.

³ American Legacy Foundation, First Look Report 17: Cigarette Preferences Among Youth--Results from the 2006 Legacy Media Tracking Online (LMTO), June 5, 2007, http://americanlegacy.org/PDFPublications/fl_17.pdf.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999. Bidi use among urban youth – Massachusetts, March-April. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 48, 796-799.

⁵ Primack BA, Sidani J, Agarwal AA, Shadel WG, Donny EC, Eissenberg TE. Prevalence of and associations with waterpipe tobacco smoking among U.S. university students. *Ann Behav Med* 2008 Aug;36(1):81-6.

⁶ Marketing Innovations, "Youth Cigarette - New Concepts," Memo to Brown & Williamson, September 1972, Bates No. 170042014.

⁷ R.J. Reynolds Inter-office Memorandum, May 9, 1974, Bates No. 511244297-4298.

⁸ Report from R.M. Manko Assoc. to Lorillard Tobacco Co. (Aug. 1978), available at <http://tobaccodocuments.org/lor/85093450-3480.html?pattern=85093450-3480#images>.

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Annual Smoking—Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses—United States, 2000-2004. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.* 2008;57(45):1226-1228.

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco-Related Mortality, available at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality/index.htm.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Reducing the Health Consequences of Smoking—25 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 1989.

¹² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Using Smokeless Tobacco: A Report of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General, 1986. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service; 1986.

