Flavored Commercial Tobacco Products

Federal law prohibits the manufacture and sale of flavored cigarettes, with the exception of menthol. However, flavors are still permitted in all other commercial tobacco products like cigars, chew and snuff, shisha, and e-cigarettes and vapes.

Flavored tobacco use is common among teens and young adults.

Two-thirds of Minnesota’s high school students who use tobacco report using menthol or other flavored tobacco products.\(^1\) Nationally, 7 in 10 middle and high school students who use tobacco use a flavored product.\(^2\)

Among Minnesota adults ages 18-24 nearly all e-cigarette users report their usual e-cigarette is flavored, and 40.5% report their usual cigar is flavored.\(^3\)

Flavored tobacco products entice youth and increase risk of addiction.

Flavors make it easier for youth to start using tobacco.

More than 80% of youth who ever tried tobacco reported starting with a flavored tobacco product.\(^4, 5\) According to the FDA nearly all youth who started using e-cigarettes did so with a flavored product.\(^6\)

In order to attract new users, tobacco companies add chemicals to improve the flavor of the smoke and reduce harshness on the throat.\(^7-10\) Flavored tobacco products were introduced in the 1970s to make it easier for people to start and become regular smokers.\(^11-13\)

Youth who use flavored tobacco are at greater risk of nicotine addiction and other health harms.

Teens who have tried flavored tobacco products are much more likely to be current smokers than teens who have never tried flavored tobacco products.\(^14\) Similarly, youth who start smoking menthol cigarettes are more likely to become regular smokers than those who start smoking non-menthol cigarettes.\(^15, 16\)

Flavorings in e-cigarette liquids are also shown to be harmful when inhaled and can inflame and damage the airway and lung tissue.\(^17-21\)
Menthol, the most popular commercial tobacco flavor, is still permitted in cigarettes.

Menthol increases the level of addiction people who smoke experience, especially among youth.\cite{15, 16, 22-27}

Currently all flavorings are prohibited from use in cigarettes in the U.S. with the exception of tobacco and menthol. Tobacco industry documents show efforts to market menthol products to African Americans, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, and young people.\cite{28, 29}

New and flavored tobacco products expose youth to nicotine.

Newer tobacco products, like e-cigarettes and vapes, contain nicotine, flavorings, and other additives.\cite{30}

E-cigarettes are sold in over 15,000 fruit, candy, and other flavors,\cite{31} including flavors like tobacco, menthol, mint, banana, piña colada, chocolate, and many others.\cite{32}

Over 37% of Minnesota high school students have tried e-cigarettes.\cite{1} Nearly one quarter of current e-cigarette users have never tried any conventional tobacco products.\cite{1}

Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm the developing adolescent brain.\cite{17, 33, 34} Because the brain is still developing until about age 25, youth and young adult exposure to nicotine can lead to addiction and disrupt attention and learning.\cite{17} No amount of nicotine is safe for youth.

Minnesota communities are working to reduce youth access to flavored tobacco.

Efforts to carry out proven tobacco control policies and evidence-based strategies are necessary to prevent all forms of tobacco use—including flavored tobacco products. The Minnesota Department of Health supports the prohibition of flavored tobacco and nicotine sales and efforts to reduce youth access to tobacco products, such as raising the prices and restricting where products are sold.

Learn more at www.health.mn.gov/tobacco.
References

17. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General. 2016, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health: Atlanta, GA.