

# Menthol

## What is Menthol?

Menthol comes from peppermint and other mint plants. It can also be made in a lab. Tobacco companies started adding menthol to cigarettes in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

## Menthol Cigarettes

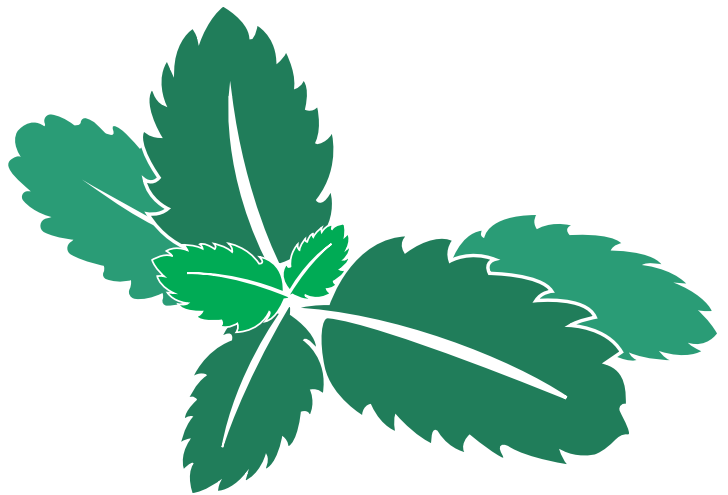
- Menthol in cigarettes causes the throat and airway to feel cool and numb. This makes the smoke feel less harsh and easier to inhale.<sup>1</sup>
- Many smokers think menthol cigarettes are less harmful than other tobacco products, but there is no data to support this.<sup>1</sup>
- Some studies have found that menthol cigarette smokers are more addicted to nicotine and less likely to quit smoking than other smokers.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Menthol Use

- Over 18.9 million people in the U.S. smoke menthol cigarettes.<sup>4</sup>
- More than half (54%) of youth smokers ages 12-17 years smoke menthols.<sup>3</sup>
- In California, 68% of African American adult smokers smoke menthols, compared to 19% of white adult smokers.<sup>5</sup>
- Nearly 50% of LGBTQ adult cigarette smokers in California smoke menthols, compared to 28% of straight adult smokers.<sup>6</sup>

## California Law – SB-793<sup>7</sup>

- On August 28, 2020, California passed a law (SB-793) that banned the sale of most flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes.
- The law was set to take effect on Jan 1, 2021.
- A group with ties to the tobacco industry filed a petition to delay or overturn the law.
- Since enough people signed the petition, SB-793 will be delayed and voted on during the 2022 general election in California.



**Call for FREE help to quit smoking!  
1-800-300-8086**

<sup>1</sup> American Lung Association (2020). *What is Menthol?*

<sup>2</sup> Villanti et al., 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Villanti et al., 2016.

<sup>4</sup> SAMHSA. *National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2017.*

<sup>5</sup> 2018 California Health Interview Survey

<sup>6</sup> Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2013-2015.

<sup>7</sup> SB-793 Flavored tobacco products.