



Let's  
Talk  
About...

## Menthol

### What is menthol?

Menthol is a chemical compound, which can be found in cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco products and tobacco rolling paper. Whether made synthetically or derived from plants, its cooling minty taste and odour minimizes the harshness of cigarette smoke in the mouth and throat. Most cigarettes contain some small concentration of menthol, but certain brands use menthol in greater amounts as a flavour enhancement, which are then marketed and advertised as “menthol.”

Menthol was first added to cigarettes in the 1920s and 1930s, becoming more commonly used in the 1950s and 1960s.

### Is menthol addictive?

While menthol cigarettes may taste better than non-menthol cigarettes, they are not safer, nor any less harmful or addictive than regular tobacco products. In fact, menthol is known to contribute to the tobacco addiction in youth smokers. Youth who smoke menthol cigarettes are considerably more likely to become addicted to nicotine than their peers who don't smoke menthol tobacco products.

This is also true for adults who smoke menthol cigarettes. Adult smokers who use menthol brands tend to wait less time after waking up in the morning before they smoke their first cigarette compared to non-menthol smokers. Time to first cigarette is a significant measure of nicotine addiction.

The minty flavour of menthol cigarettes makes it easier for smokers to inhale more deeply and limits the body's natural instinct to cough, which contributes to the addiction to menthol in youth and adult smokers.

Menthol smokers also show more signs of nicotine dependence and are less likely than non-menthol smokers to successfully quit smoking. Menthol directly promotes nicotine cravings and triggers areas in the brain that process pleasure, reward and addiction. Research and evidence support that menthol cigarettes are much more addictive compared to standard, non-menthol cigarettes, which can make them more difficult to quit, and means that menthol smokers are more likely to relapse multiple times before a successful quit attempt.

For more information and support, visit [albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca) or call 1-866-710-QUIT (7848).

Effective June 1, 2015, the sale of flavoured tobacco products was banned in Alberta under the *Tobacco Reduction Amendment Regulation* with exceptions for large cigars and pipe tobacco. To further reduce tobacco use among Alberta's youth and help prevent future generations from developing a lifelong tobacco addiction, the Government of Alberta has strengthened tobacco-related legislation to include a ban on menthol flavored tobacco products effective September 30, 2015. For additional information and updates on tobacco reduction regulations in Alberta, visit Alberta Health at <http://www.health.alberta.ca/initiatives/tobacco-reduction.html>.