
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**Health & Wellness: Teen Use Of Menthol Cigarettes On the Rise**

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299 words
15 March 2011
The Wall Street Journal
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English
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The use of menthol cigarettes is rising among adolescents and is "very high" among minority youth, a Food and Drug Administration advisory panel said in partial draft report released Monday.

The Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee could make a recommendation about whether menthol flavoring should be banned. The panel's report is due next week.

Menthol cigarettes account for about 30% of total cigarette sales in the U.S. The issue is of major importance to Lorillard Inc. the maker of the leading menthol brand, Newport. The product accounts for roughly 90% of the company's sales. Altria Group Inc. and Reynolds American Inc. also market menthol cigarettes but aren't as reliant on them for overall sales.

The tobacco industry has said there's no evidence that menthol in cigarettes makes it more likely people will start smoking compared to regular cigarettes, and that menthol cigarettes carry the same risks as regular cigarettes.

Another draft chapter of the menthol report, previously released, concluded that there's "insufficient" evidence to conclude that smokers of menthol cigarettes have a different risk of tobacco-related disease compared to those who smoke non-menthol cigarettes.

The most recent draft chapter, which looks at patterns of menthol-cigarette smoking, said more than 80% of African-American adolescent smokers and more than half of Hispanic smokers ages 12 to 17 use menthol cigarettes.

Smoking among teenagers has declined in the past decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2009, 19.5% of students in grades nine through 12 reported smoking in the past month, compared with 34.8% in 1999. About 21% of U.S. adults smoke.

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