Flavored Tobacco Products
Fact Sheet

Tobacco Control Program • June 2021

Many tobacco products, including electronic nicotine delivery systems and vapor products (ENDS), and little cigars, come in flavors and are popular with CT youth. Since 2014, ENDS have been the most commonly used tobacco product among high school students, and results of the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey show that the overall high school use rate is 27.5% and the middle school rate is 2.3%.¹

ENDS or Vapor Products are electronic devices that may be used to simulate smoking in the delivery of nicotine or other substances to a person inhaling from the device. These include electronic or e-cigarettes, vape or vape pens, Juul, and other vapor products.

In the Tobacco Control Act signed into federal law in 2009, cigarettes with a characterizing flavor other than tobacco or menthol were prohibited. There was no similar mandate for other tobacco products, but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was given the power to prohibit the use of flavors, including menthol, in all tobacco products.²

FDA announced that after February 6, 2020 flavored pods and cartridges can no longer be sold, with an exception for both tobacco and menthol flavors. This restriction does NOT extend to tanks, e-liquids, or disposables, and does not include any other tobacco products.³

KEY POINTS:

- There are thousands of flavors of ENDS and other tobacco products that are popular with youth
- Flavors make it easier to start, make use seem safer, and cover up the harsh taste of tobacco products
- Youth can quickly become addicted with only a few puffs, their brains are still developing until age 25

In April 2021, FDA announced a plan to propose tobacco product standards to ban menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes, and ban all characterizing flavors, including menthol, in cigars within the next year.

ENDS have been marketed by promoting a wide variety of flavors. The variety of candy and fruit flavors and colorful packaging are especially attractive to children, and the flavor masks the harsh taste of tobacco.⁴
79 percent of youth (aged 12 to 17) and 89 percent of young adults (aged 18 to 24) stated that they used a tobacco product because the product “comes in flavors that I like”.

During 2018-2019 Juul Labs, Inc. suspended sales of flavored products at stores that were not adult-only venues. Mint and menthol flavors are still available.

5.6% of Connecticut adults reported current use of ENDS products in the 2018 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics “…any regulatory policy that effectively limits youth exposure to flavored e-cigarettes is likely to improve pediatric population health.”

KEY POINTS:

- ENDS have been marketed by promoting flavors and using a wide variety of media channels and approaches similar to those used in the past for conventional tobacco products.
- There are no current restrictions on advertising ENDS.
- Menthol facilitates early initiation to tobacco products, increases the risks of addiction, and makes cessation more difficult, especially among black smokers.
- Even though a flavor is okay to eat, it does not mean it is safe to vape or smoke.

Spotlight on Flavor: Diacetyl

Flavorings are often complex mixtures of natural and man-made substances. At least one flavoring chemical was detected in 47 of 51 unique flavors tested. FDA evaluates flavoring ingredients to determine whether they are “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS) to be eaten. Even if they are safe to eat, these ingredients might still be harmful to breathe in the forms and amounts to which food and chemical industry workers may be exposed. Diacetyl is used extensively in the food flavoring and production industries, and occupational exposure to this substance has been associated with severe respiratory impairment and the disease obliterative bronchiolitis. Diacetyl is used to create buttery-type flavors in ENDS and was found in 39 of the 51 flavors tested.
References


9 Environmental Health Perspectives. *Flavoring chemicals in e-cigarettes: diacetyl, 2,3-pentanedione, and acetoin in a sample of 51 products, including fruit-, candy-, and cocktail-flavored e-cigarettes*. Allen JG, et al. DC. 2016. 124:733–739; [http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1510185](http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1510185).