



# Blacks & Menthol

***"Young Blacks have found their thing, it's menthol in general and KOOL in particular."  
Philip Morris Tobacco Company, 1974***

- It was realized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that Blacks smoked at a fraction of the rate of whites. For the tobacco industry, this translated into a new and untapped market for tobacco products.
  - In the 1960's the tobacco industry noticed that menthol was popular with Blacks. They began to market menthol cigarettes heavily in urban, segregated, and Black communities, and they haven't stopped since.
- Marketing plays a major role in influencing consumers' purchase decisions.
  - The tobacco industry advertises, promotes, and discounts menthol cigarettes most heavily in Black communities.
- 75 percent of Black adult smokers and 90 percent of Black young adult smokers "prefer" menthol cigarettes.
  - According to the American Legacy Foundation, African Americans rank # 1 (76%) in menthol use among ethnic populations.
    - Asian Americans (62%), Hispanic/ Latino (47%), Whites (29%).
  - The top two mentholated brands in the United States are Newport (ranks #1) and KOOL (ranks #2).

## WHAT IS MENTHOL???

- Menthol is an organic compound naturally occurring in mint plants. It is also synthetically manufactured. Menthol is widely used in a number of products and features certain therapeutic qualities.

### **Menthol cigarettes are potentially more hazardous than non-menthol cigarettes.**

- The original purpose of menthol flavor in cigarettes was to mask the bitter taste of nicotine and the elements in smoke.
- Menthol's pleasant, cooling sensation causes the user to inhale more deeply with each drag.
  - Because of this, menthol smokers intake a greater amount of smoke, toxic chemicals, and carbon monoxide than non-menthol smokers.
- There is mounting evidence that menthol cigarettes are a starter product for youth.
- Less experienced smokers smoke menthol cigarettes because they believe menthol reduces harshness.
  - Menthol *masks the harshness and irritation* of cigarettes, allowing an effective dose of nicotine, the addictive chemical in cigarettes.

### **Menthol cigarettes appear to be more addictive than non-menthol cigarettes.**

- Menthol smokers have a more difficult time quitting than non-menthol smokers.

