

Excluding Cigars Undermines Public Health

All cigars, including large cigars, cigarillos, and little cigars pose a serious threat to Americans' health, with 10.2 million U.S. adults reporting current cigar use in 2022.¹ Yet, these products remain less regulated than other tobacco products, including cigarettes and e-cigarettes. Policy loopholes often leave cigars out of evidence-based tobacco control measures: **cigars are frequently taxed at lower rates than cigarettes, cigars are often exempted from smoke-free laws, and flavored cigars are not covered by existing federal flavor prohibitions.** These exclusions provide opportunity for the tobacco industry to aggressively market cigars to young people and at-risk communities.

Cigars must be taxed at the same rate as cigarettes

All cigars, regardless of size, must be taxed at rates equivalent to cigarettes with no cap on tax rates. Cigars, as with all tobacco products, should be subject to regular, significant excise tax increases to encourage people to quit rather than switch to cheaper, less-regulated cigars. Aligning cigar taxes with cigarette taxes helps keep prices high, discourage youth initiation, support quitting, and reduce tobacco-related health care costs and disparities.

Cigars must be included smoke-free laws

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke; even brief exposure can cause serious and potentially deadly health issues.^{6,7,8} Secondhand smoke from cigars poses significant health risks to people who smoke and those around them.⁵ To protect public health, **smoke-free laws must explicitly include cigars** and prohibit their use in cigar and tobacco shops, bars designated as “cigar bars,” gaming facilities, and all other places where smoking is prohibited.

Comprehensive smoke-free laws improve indoor air quality, reduce secondhand smoke exposure, change social norms regarding the acceptability of smoking, prevent youth and young adult smoking initiation, reduce asthma hospitalizations among people who don't smoke, and promote cessation.^{7,8}

Health Effects of Cigar Use

Cigar smoke contains the same potentially cancer-causing toxic compounds and chemicals found in cigarette smoke.⁵ Regular cigar smoking is estimated to be responsible for 9,000 premature deaths each year² **and increases the risk of cancers of the lung, oral cavity, larynx, and esophagus.**³

9,000 Premature Deaths are Linked to Cigar Smoking²

People who smoke cigars are four to ten times more likely to die from laryngeal, oral or esophageal cancers than people who do not smoke.⁴ Heavy cigar smoking also increases the risk of developing coronary heart diseases and lung diseases, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis.⁵

\$27.9 billion in health care expenses⁶

Cigar-attributable annual health care expenditures are estimated to total \$27.9 billion annually between 2001-2018.⁶

People **who do not smoke but are exposed to secondhand smoke** at home or at work have a 25%–30% **higher risk of heart disease** and a 20%–30% **higher risk of lung cancer.**⁸

Smoke-free Exemptions Impact on Worker Health

A person's place of employment should not determine whether they can breathe clean, smoke-free air while at work. **People who work in places where smoking is allowed have no choice but to inhale this deadly secondhand smoke on a regular basis.** They deserve the same protections as all workers.

Beyond health concerns, smoke-filled workplaces increase the economic burden of smoking including increased absenteeism, lost productivity, and increased maintenance and insurance costs that affect the bottom line for businesses and cause increased health care costs for taxpayers.

Flavored tobacco products, including cigars, must be prohibited

Characterizing flavors, including menthol, should be prohibited in all tobacco products, including cigars. Cigars, cigarillos, and little cigars are all sold in many flavors that are appealing to young people, such as menthol, banana, mango, grape, Tropical Twist, Purple Swish and chocolate. These flavored products are commonly sold by tobacco retailers such as convenience stores, but, unlike cigarettes, are not required to be placed behind the countertop.¹⁰ Flavored tobacco marketing especially for cigars are more likely to be found in predominantly Black communities compared to other communities.¹¹

Flavored cigars are very popular among youth and young adults. **In 2023, nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of youth who smoke cigars reported smoking a flavored cigar in the past 30 days, up from 44.4% in 2021.**¹² Flavored cigars can also serve as a gateway for people who do not use tobacco products to start using tobacco. Multiple longitudinal studies show that initiating cigar use with a flavored product is associated with a higher likelihood of subsequent and regular cigar use among youth and young adults.^{13,14}

VENTILATION

Ventilation systems do not protect people from the carcinogens found in secondhand smoke. The Surgeon General has concluded that separating people who smoke from those who don't, 'cleaning the air,' and ventilating buildings **cannot eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.**⁷ The only effective way to fully protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke is to completely eliminate smoking in indoor public spaces.

Disparities in Youth Cigar Use

An estimated 330,000 U.S. students reported current use of cigars in 2024. Black students are significantly more likely to use cigars than their peers. In 2024, 2.7% of surveyed Black high school students reported using cigars in the past 30 days, compared to 1.5% among all high school students.¹⁵

Cigars are currently the 2nd most popular tobacco product among Black youth¹⁵

These disparities are due in part to tobacco industry marketing practices that result in higher exposure to tobacco advertising and promotions and greater tobacco retail outlet density in communities of color. Research has found that retailers in neighborhoods with a higher proportion of Black residents and in lower-income neighborhoods are more likely to **sell flavored little cigars and cigarillos, display exterior cigar advertisements, offer price promotions, and feature youth-appealing marketing** than retailers in neighborhoods with fewer Black residents and higher income levels.¹¹

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