



We Want to Quit: Supporting Cessation in African American Communities



THE CENTER FOR
BLACK HEALTH & EQUITY



National Jewish
Health®

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INTRODUCTION

Seventy percent of African Americans who smoke report a desire to quit commercial tobacco, and this is encouraging news. Yet, while this percentage is higher than that of white people who smoke, African Americans often report more failed quit attempts. There are many factors that contribute to this concerning reality, but there are also many solutions for increasing successful quit rates among African Americans. The Center for Black Health & Equity is proud to partner with National Jewish Health to provide *The 70%* resource guide for building effective cessation programs for African Americans who are ready to quit commercial tobacco for good. It is designed to assist state tobacco control managers in educating, engaging, encouraging and supporting Black Americans in their unique journeys to quit using menthols and other tobacco products.

The 70% guide will provide a clear understanding of how to engage African Americans who smoke in cessation treatment programs while also taking into account the social determinants of health that impact their everyday lives. This document will also challenge the overtly racist rhetoric that Big Tobacco has promoted regarding menthol, a key element in addiction, and increase your understanding of the nuanced Black experience.

This toolkit will provide tobacco control personnel with brief information about the relationship between the African American community and tobacco. It will present the social implications of menthol flavoring, how menthol continues to be disproportionately targeted to African Americans, detail cessation challenges and suggestions on how to be a catalyst for successful quit journeys for the African Americans in your community.

Acknowledgements



The Massachusetts
Quitline



1.800.QUIT.NOW



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

History of African Americans and Big Tobacco

The African American consumer was not always a target for Big Tobacco marketing. Before World War II, when African Americans were not especially high consumers, Big Tobacco used Black caricatures in their advertising to attract white people who smoke. Minstrel depictions and similarly racist forms of entertainment appealed to poor whites' need to maintain a higher social standing than Black American citizens. After the war, Big Tobacco looked for ways to expand its business. As African Americans came home from the war, many were making more money. They moved into the middle class and had more disposable income. Thus, the advertising was recreated to appeal to them.



During this time in history, there were little to no African American voices being heard in the advertising world. Tobacco companies strived to gain market share and African Americans became target consumers. Big Tobacco began to put popular African Americans in prominent advertisements and were some of the first companies to begin hiring African Americans into management positions. This forged a relationship with the African American community that, to this day, makes it appear as if Big Tobacco supports the Black community. Currently, we still see Big Tobacco sponsoring African American cultural events and political leaders.

WHO MAKES UP THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY?

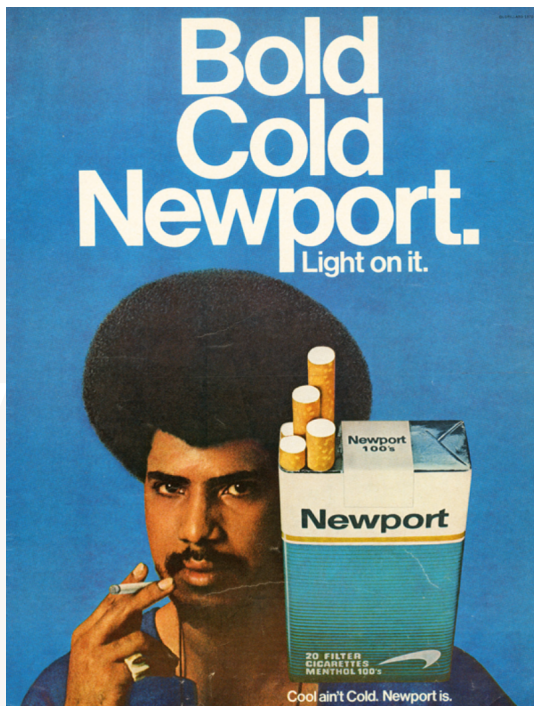
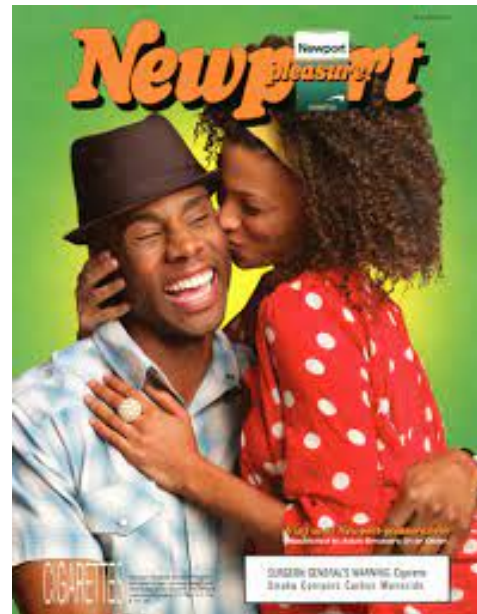
African American communities are diverse. They are comprised of people who have multiple perspectives, cultures and lifestyles. It is important not to approach Black communities with stereotypes in mind. Acknowledging differing norms and values will be important for developing tailored solutions to individual quit challenges. Here are some useful facts about the African American population.

- African Americans make up about 14% of the population
- About 56% live in the South
- Black purchasing power exceeds \$1.4 trillion
- 8% are vegetarians (as compared to 3% of the general population)
- 2% identify as Muslim and 80% identify as Christian
- About half live in suburban communities
- About 5% identify as LGBTQ++/SGL
- 70% of Black fathers are active in their children's lives (as compared to 60% of white fathers)
- 40% are college educated (as compared to 56% of whites)
- Black Hispanics make up 5% of the U.S. population

"Being Black in America involves a process of moving through and adopting from many different cultures. To define what's authentically Black is virtually impossible, as there are as many ways to be Black as there are Black people." Justin Simien

History of African Americans and Big Tobacco

Big Tobacco marketing strategies are critical in understanding tobacco use. To get more African Americans to buy cigarettes, more African Americans needed to pick up the habit. Subsequently, Big Tobacco became one of the first industries to use middle-class imagery of African Americans in their advertising.



The majority of these advertisements were for menthol-flavored tobacco. Once Big Tobacco started this predatory campaign in the 1950s, menthol use skyrocketed. In less than 50 years, menthol use went from about 5% to almost 90% for African Americans who smoke. The companies also gave out free samples of tobacco products and sold them at a lower price in predominantly Black communities. Some of these tactics are still used today.

Menthol is a Social Justice Issue

Problem

Menthol cigarettes often act as a starter product. The flavor makes smoking less harsh on the throat, resulting in deeper inhalation. It is also well-documented that menthol contributes to greater addiction and makes quitting more difficult. For decades menthol has been heavily marketed to Black communities.



Threat

- 85% of African American adults who smoke use menthol flavored products
- 94% of African American youth who smoke use menthol products
- More advertisements and discounts for menthol products are found in Black communities
- Menthol cigarettes are cheaper in Black communities
- Menthol is an anesthetic, allowing for a deeper inhalation of toxins and nicotine
- Quitting menthol cigarettes is harder than non-menthol flavored cigarettes
- Young people who start smoking menthol are twice as likely to smoke daily or throughout their lifetime
- Information about the addictive, cancer-causing nature of menthol flavored cigarettes has historically been suppressed from Black communities
- African Americans typically start smoking later in life, smoke less than other groups, but experience a higher rate of tobacco-related illnesses

*"We don't have more time. People are dying."
- Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley on the FDA plans to ban menthol.*



How the FDA Menthol Ban Affects Cessation

It has been years since the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act was signed into law. In its ban on flavored cigarettes and cigars, it excluded menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes. On Thursday, April 29, 2021 the FDA announced its commitment to ban menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes and cigars. This decision by the FDA is the most aggressive stance that the agency has ever taken on menthol and is a step forward toward health equity.

The FDA recognizes the importance of ensuring broad and equitable access to all the tools and resources that can help currently addicted smokers quit. This ban is a significant win, especially for the African American community. The FDA suggests that 230,000 African Americans will quit in the first 13 to 17 months after the ban goes into effect. It is an opportunity for people who smoke to be educated through messages about tobacco industry targeting, why menthol cigarettes are harder to quit and how to stop smoking. Providing cessation resources such as Quitline counseling will be critical to the success of smokers quitting mentholated tobacco products.



COMBATING MISINFORMATION ABOUT BANNING MENTHOL

Those who benefit most from tobacco industry funding and donations do not want menthol to be banned. As they spread misinformation to keep these flavors, it is important for advocates to stay equipped with the facts:

- A menthol ban regulates retailers and manufacturers, not those who may use or possess these products.
- There is no evidence that a menthol ban will result in an illegal "menthol" market.
- The FDA has no authority to criminalize individuals; issues of police brutality are serious and should not be undermined by a menthol ban's false associations.

Learn more at CenterforBlackHealth.org.

STRESS AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

For decades, researchers have reported that discrimination and structural/institutional racism can affect mental health. The pressure of being Black in an oppressive society is a major stressor.

Racism is not always blatantly obvious to those who are not experiencing it. Racism can manifest in many ways such as:

- Suffering disproportionately from chronic health conditions compared to those in other racial groups
- Having personal experiences depreciated by healthcare professionals
- Experiencing a heightened sense of awareness during simple acts like shopping, going to a park, or just walking around the block
- Reliving trauma after seeing Black faces under duress on TV
- Combatting the impact of media-driven stereotypes

WE WANT TO QUIT

Tobacco kills more than 45,000 African Americans each year, but most African Americans who smoke want to quit and actively attempt to do so. Social circumstances, including targeted marketing and discrimination, make it easier to start and harder to quit. Menthol and other flavored products make quitting difficult, too.

Here are some facts associated with quitting menthol cigarettes:

- About 73% of adult African Americans who smoke report that they want to quit
- Each year over 58% of African Americans attempt to quit, and only 3.3% are successful
- Despite more quit attempts, African Americans are less successful at quitting than those of other races and ethnicities.
- People who prefer menthol cigarettes have a harder time quitting than those who use non-mentholated

THE QUIT JOURNEY

Quitting is hard for everyone and can take several tries before success. These steps may help provide support for one's quit journey. Resources mentioned here can be found at www.CenterforBlackHealth.org.

GET INSPIRED

Though most people understand how smoking is linked to serious illnesses, people who started smoking at a young age may not be as aware. Listening to the stories of former smokers and their families can provide perspective. Find inspiration from campaigns like *Tips from Former Smokers* and other similar media campaigns.

MAKE A PLAN

Having a plan can help one stay on track and motivated. The steps include reaching out to an outside source such as 1-800-QUIT-NOW for support, choosing a specific day to quit and telling a friend. This person should be someone that will help with accountability throughout this quit journey. Anticipate what can be a trigger and use nicotine replacements.

- P - Pick a Quit Date
- L- Let others know
- A - Anticipate triggers
- N - Nicotine replacements should be used

TAKE HOME RESOURCES

Beyond a call to the Quitline, tangible resources that can be accessed at home are important to have. The best examples are documentaries and reading materials centered around the Black experience with tobacco, such as *Pathways to Freedom*.

STAY INFORMED

As mentioned throughout this toolkit, tobacco companies consistently target African American consumers often unbeknownst to them. Big Tobacco supporters who receive tobacco monies are sometimes disguised as community leaders and organizations. Exposing these facts to African Americans who smoke can help them avoid further manipulation by tobacco companies and say no to menthol.

About The Quitline

1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-800-784-8669

When you speak to the public about Quitline services, make sure you remember to discuss the following:

- Studies show that brief counseling when delivered by a trained health care provider can increase success in quitting.
- Quitlines help more than smokers; they also help those who vape, dip, or chew to stop.
- Services are free, including the call(s), coaching, and materials.
- Calls are confidential; Quitlines take steps to protect the identity of those who call.
- Tobacco treatment specialists are typically available at convenient times, often 24 hours a day/7 days a week.
- Coaching is available in multiple languages including English, Spanish, and translation for more than 200 languages.
- Many Quitlines have online interactive tools available 24 hours a day/ 7 days per week and provide access to tailored motivational messages, step-by-step guides to cutting down and quitting tobacco along with online support from other quitters and quitting specialists.
- Callers may receive free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT); some lines require callers to be enrolled in Quitline coaching to receive NRT.



REAL TALK ABOUT STARTING THE ROAD TO QUIT

For African Americans quitting can be different. The choice to quit is not an isolated one--it is a personal, family and community decision requiring everyone's support. Most African Americans seeking to quit are motivated to save money, get healthy and protect children from secondhand smoke. Others, though, may have difficulty getting to the first step of a quit journey.

Coming out of hiding

Because of social or religious reasons, many Black smokers are committed to closet smoking, expertly hiding the habit from friends and family for years. Be sensitive to the fact that for some, seeking help will begin with divulging a long-held secret.

Change of routine

Stopping smoking means changing routine. Many things seem to go along with having a cigarette. These might include taking a break at work, having a drink, or socializing with friends. Additionally, there are more tobacco ads in Black communities. Stopping tobacco use means being aware of triggers (both visual and mental) and learning to deal with cravings by replacing old behaviors. Using medications like NRT can also help.

Understanding the "non-smokers"

Many tobacco users prefer Black 'N Milds, Swisher Sweets, or other cigarillos. Because they may not smoke these as frequently, these users may not consider themselves "smokers". Be specific about cigarillos when discussing the need to end addiction.

Taking addiction seriously

While tobacco addiction is not unlike any other addiction, many people have a hard time accepting that a legal, readily available substance requires a serious plan for quitting. It is important for one's friends and family to understand that nicotine addiction is real and must be supported like any other addiction.



TRUSTED COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGIES

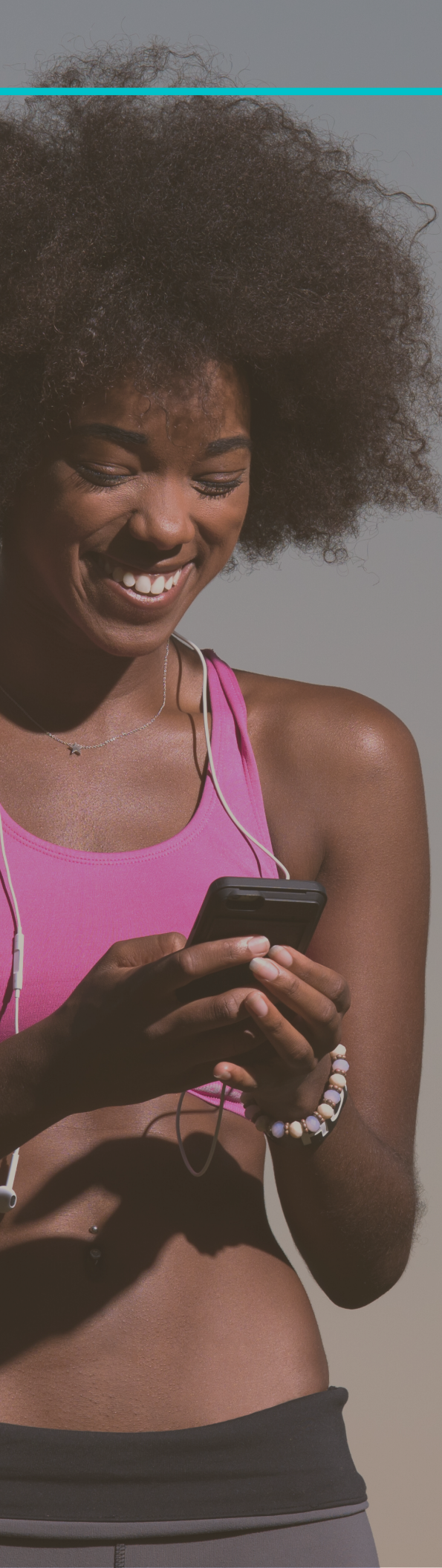
African American communities are proud and rich with culture. To reach members of the African American community, spend time with them. Consider attending events or religious services, visiting businesses and civic organizations. Communities may have museums, art galleries, neighborhood private schools, libraries and other cultural sources that are deeply important to its members. There are over 300 African American museums and affiliate institutions across the country. Take time to research those mainstays and meet with the staff who may provide insights into the makeup of the community.

Consider national events and other holidays marking historical milestones such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, uneteenth, Thanksgiving, 4th of July, Kwanzaa and Black History Month.

These are festive events that draw families together in celebration and can be perfect opportunities to connect. Don't stop there. Look for local events such as Caribbean carnivals, jazz and R&B festivals, poetry slams, and Battle of the Bands.

Extend your outreach efforts beyond the traditional spaces such as barbershops, beauty salons and clinics. Make sure to connect with local houses of worship and schools. There are 104 colleges and universities in the United States that are identified by the U.S. Department of Education as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Effective outreach cannot be done with just one visit or conversation. Building relationships is needed to initiate trust and establish a foundation to reach many.



TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When conveying information about the Quitline, the messenger is just as important as the message. Having trusted messengers to convey the importance of quitting and the benefits of cessation counseling can be helpful in driving African Americans to call the Quitline.

For many groups, the person delivering the message is often better received if he or she is from a similar racial or ethnic background or community. Even when African Americans have access to the mainstream media, they might be more responsive (and therefore more willing to follow guidance) if someone they know or trust delivers the message.

People to consider as messengers include:

- Religious leaders, barbers and hairstylists in African American communities
- Social media and cultural influencers
- Civil rights leaders and advocates
- Community and neighborhood leaders who are perceived as credible
- Reporters, editors, announcers and news directors in media outlets that serve the community across platforms
- The matriarch of a family; she is often the most respected and trusted source of information in the family unit
- Elders in the community tend to know the ins and outs; they can offer wisdom and guidance to younger people about quitting smoking
- An African American former smoker that successfully quit by calling the Quitline
- Researchers from Historically Black Colleges & University



No Menthol
SUNDAY

No Menthol Sunday

No Menthol Sunday, an international observance day led by The Center for Black Health & Equity, is an important opportunity to engage faith leaders and their communities in a discussion about how to improve health outcomes for African Americans by addressing the role of menthol and tobacco use. Tobacco is still the number one killer of African Americans, and people of faith can play a major role in changing this. Not only does No Menthol Sunday encourage congregations and communities to support one another in escaping tobacco addiction, but it also aims to highlight the role of menthol and flavors in particular. No Menthol Sunday takes place yearly on the third Sunday of May.

TRUSTED TOOLS & RESOURCES

BLACK LIVES BLACK LUNGS

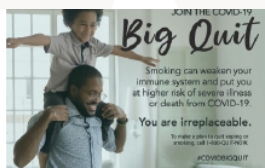


Black Lives Black Lungs Documentary is a short film documenting Big Tobacco’s 50+ year campaign transforming menthol into a “black cigarette.”

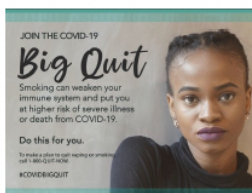
Pathways to Freedom addresses issues specific to African Americans such as targeted advertising campaigns and historical, cultural and socioeconomic influences. It also offers proven strategies for anyone who wants to quit.



No Menthol Sunday is a faith-based observance day designed to raise awareness about important issues in Black health. When people of faith remain vigilant, educate youth, and inspire community action, we will begin to move toward total health justice as it relates to tobacco.



Big Quit materials and more tailored African American tobacco prevention resources or assistance in creation go to: www.centerforblackhealth.org



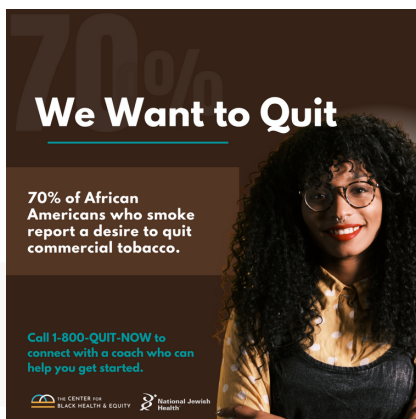
SOCIAL MEDIA SHAREABLES & BANNER

Ready to download and use for all social media initiatives. Just click the image to download and share!



Captions

More African Americans report a desire to quit smoking than other smokers, but often have less success. A quit coach can help you address triggers, get nicotine replacement medication and help you win. #liberation #quitnow #tobaccofreeliving #wewanttoquit



Quitting is hard and can take several tries--and menthol makes quitting even harder. There is no reason to walk through your quit journey alone. Set your quit date and call 1-800-Quit-Now to get a quit coach that can help you win. #liberation #quitnow #tobaccofreeliving #wewanttoquit



Those who choose Swisher Sweets, Black N Milds, mint JUUL or other menthols are smokers, too. Smoking is still the number one killer of Black Americans. Quitting is possible. #liberation #quitnow #tobaccofreeliving #wewanttoquit



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