Flavored Tobacco Products

WHAT TYPES OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS ARE FLAVORED?
There are several types of flavored tobacco products on the market, including cigars, chewing tobacco, blunt wraps, electronic cigarettes and shisha, the tobacco used in hookah. These products help the tobacco industry get around the FDA's 2009 ban of flavored cigarettes.¹ Flavored tobacco products are often sold in attractive packaging for a low price. Some cigars are frequently available for less than $1.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON FLAVORS USED IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS?
Cigars, chewing tobacco, blunt wraps, electronic cigarettes and shisha are sold in an endless array of fruit, candy, dessert and novelty flavors. Popular flavors include chocolate, piña colada, apple, grape, berry, mint, cotton candy, bubble gum and menthol. Scientists recently found that the same flavorings used in tobacco products are also used in candy and Kool-Aid drink mixes.² These flavorings were often present in higher amounts in tobacco products than in candy.

WHO USES FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS?
Because of their sweet flavors, low cost and attractive packaging, flavored tobacco products are especially appealing to youth. Young people are much more likely to use flavored tobacco products than adults.³ A recent CDC study found that 42 percent of middle and high school tobacco users use flavored products.⁴ Studies show that young people perceive flavored tobacco products as tasting better and being safer than unflavored products, even though they are just as dangerous and addictive as cigarettes.⁵

HOW DO FLAVORS IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS AFFECT YOUTH INITIATION AND ADDICTION?
Nearly 90 percent of adult smokers began smoking in their teens.⁶ The flavoring in these products makes it easier for new, young users to take up tobacco, because the flavoring masks the harshness of the tobacco and enhances the user's pleasure.⁷ Flavored products often serve as a "starter" product for young people, many of whom eventually move to smoking cigarettes.

WHAT DOES THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS?
We know a lot about this thanks to the millions of tobacco documents released as part of the tobacco settlements. We know about the "Graduation Theory," a method used by the tobacco industry that aims to secure customer loyalty.⁸ This approach implies that new users start with milder tasting and flavored products. They graduate to full-bodied, less flavored items and remain addicted for life.
WHY SHOULD COMMUNITIES CARE AND WHAT CAN THEY DO ABOUT FLAVORED PRODUCTS?

Flavored tobacco products are a major public health concern because they encourage young people to start using tobacco. While the FDA banned flavored cigarettes other than menthol in 2009, the ban does not affect other tobacco products, many of which are now heavily marketed by the tobacco industry. The use of these products, especially among young people, has spiked.

Because the FDA ruling does not prevent local communities from banning other types of flavored tobacco products, state and local governments can adopt laws that restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products within their jurisdiction. Limiting the sale of products, setting a minimum price or creating a minimum pack size are some of the ways communities can protect their youth by making flavored tobacco products less accessible and less appealing.

WHAT OTHER COMMUNITIES HAVE TAKEN A STANCE AGAINST FLAVORED PRODUCTS?

New York City and Providence, R.I., passed policies restricting flavored tobacco sales, with the exception of menthol-flavored products. Chicago passed an ordinance restricting sale of all flavored products, including menthol cigarettes, within 500 feet of schools except in adult-only tobacco retailers.

In Minnesota, Saint Paul and Brooklyn Center adopted ordinances that require cigars to be sold for a minimum price of $2.10 unless sold in packs of five or more. Bloomington adopted an ordinance setting the minimum price at $2.60. These ordinances are meant to make cigars, many of which are flavored, more expensive and less appealing to price-sensitive youth.

SOURCES

6 Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2009, December 14). The path to smoking addiction starts at very young ages.

Shisha is the tobacco used in smoking hookah. Typically it is flavored, as well.

E-cigarette liquid, known as e-juice, comes in numerous youth-friendly flavors, such as the pomberry, psychedelic peach and fruit stripe shown above.

“Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy, if you know what I am saying.”
U.S. Tobacco Executive