



# LITTLE CIGARS & CIGARILLOS



Happy Times produces these grape flavored “superillos.” Here two were sold for \$0.89.

## WHAT ARE LITTLE CIGARS AND CIGARILLOS?

Little cigars and cigarillos are machine-made, low cost, flavored and inhaled like a cigarette. Like cigarettes, little cigars are often sold in packs of 20 and contain a filter. Little cigars are wrapped in brown paper that contains a small amount of finely milled tobacco. Little cigars come in a variety of flavors including chocolate and strawberry.

Cigarillos are another type of cigar with increasing use among youth. They are slightly larger than a cigarette, usually do not contain a filter, and have tobacco in the paper. Cigarillos vary in packaging size and are sold in an assortment of flavors.

## ARE LITTLE CIGARS AND CIGARILLOS REGULATED?

Regulation is lacking for little cigars and cigarillos. In 2009, the manufacture and sale of flavored cigarettes was prohibited by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In response, tobacco companies have added flavors to cigars, making them appealing to youth.<sup>1</sup>

Not only are little cigars and cigarillos flavored, they are cheap. In 2009, small cigars were subject to increased federal taxes. Little cigar makers responded by slightly increasing the weight of their products to avoid this taxation.<sup>1</sup> In Minnesota, little cigars and cigarillos are subject to increased state taxes as of July 1, 2013; however, these products can still be much less expensive than cigarettes.

Cigars and cigarillos are not subject to other FDA regulations such as bans on terms like “light” and “low-tar.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, some little cigar and cigarillo companies market their products on youth-friendly websites, like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF LITTLE CIGAR AND CIGARILLO USE?

The health effects of little cigars and cigarillos are similar to the risks associated with smoking cigarettes and include cancer, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).<sup>1</sup> Cigar smoke contains toxic and carcinogenic ingredients.<sup>1</sup>

Little cigars and cigarillos are often smoked and inhaled like cigarettes. Flavoring can disguise the harshness of the smoke, making it easier for first time tobacco users to smoke these products.



This Splitarillos advertisement was on the company’s Facebook page. Their tag line “Split it with your friends” is a youth-friendly message.

**Percent of MN High School Students who have ever used specific tobacco products, by gender<sup>2</sup>, 2011**

|   | Female | Male | Total |
|---|--------|------|-------|
| Cigarettes  | 37%    | 43%  | 40%   |
| Cigars, cigarillos or little cigars                 | 21%    | 41%  | 31%   |
| <b>Flavored</b> cigars, cigarillos or little cigars | 21%    | 36%  | 29%   |

This table shows MN high school students are likely to try flavored cigars.



Executive Branch Cigar has over 30 thousand “likes” on Facebook. The brand ambassador is Snoop Dogg, a popular rap artist among youth.

## WHO USES LITTLE CIGARS AND CIGARILLOS?

Cigar sales have doubled in the last decade primarily due to aggressive marketing of these cheap, flavored little cigars and cigarillos.<sup>1</sup> With fruity flavors, candy-like packaging and deals like “2 for \$0.89,” little cigars and cigarillos are attractive, accessible, and affordable for young people.

In Minnesota, more than one in ten high school students are current users of little cigars or cigarillos.<sup>2</sup> Among high school boys, nearly one in five currently use little cigars or cigarillos.<sup>2</sup> Nearly one-third of MN high school students have ever tried flavored cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PREVENT YOUTH LITTLE CIGAR AND CIGARILLO USE?

Local communities need to regulate these products, which are heavily marketed and appealing to youth. Several options are available including:

- Prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products;
- Prohibit self-service displays and require all tobacco products to be placed behind the counter;
- Require minimum pack sizes of 4 or 5 cigars; and
- Require a minimum price for cigar products.

Other cities and states have successfully passed policies from the list above, including Maine, Washington D.C., Providence, RI and Boston, MA.<sup>1</sup> Cities in Minnesota can enact similar policies to prevent our youth from becoming addicted to these harmful products.

Sources:

1. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (2013, March 13). Not your grandfather’s cigar: A new generation of cheap & sweet cigars threatens a new generation of kids.
2. Minnesota Department of Health (2011). Teens and Tobacco in Minnesota, 2011 Update: Results from the Minnesota Youth Tobacco and Asthma Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/tobacco/FullReport2011.pdf>

This publication has been made possible by funding from the Minnesota Department of Health’s Tobacco-Free Communities grant program.

