



## THE RISE OF CIGARS AND CIGAR-SMOKING HARMS

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Although cigarette smoking has been slowly declining, total consumption of cigars in the United States has increased dramatically since 1993, reversing a decline in consumption that had persisted for most of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Between 2000 and 2006, for example, cigarette consumption declined by 13 percent while cigar consumption increased by 37 percent.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, many mistakenly believe that cigars are not harmful, but, in fact, cigars are addictive and harmful and are often marketed in a wide variety of kid-attracting flavors.

**Health Harms to Users from Cigar Smoking.** Cigar smoking is addictive and harms health in many ways. Cigar smoke, like cigarette smoke, contains toxic and cancer-causing chemicals that are harmful to both smokers and nonsmokers. In fact, cigars produce even more secondhand smoke than cigarettes and can contain higher levels of some toxins than cigarettes.<sup>3</sup>

While many believe that cigars are not harmful because cigar smoke is not inhaled, studies have shown that some cigar smokers actually do inhale, thereby absorbing smoke into their lungs and bloodstream and depositing smoke particles in their lungs as well as their stomachs and digestive tract.<sup>4</sup> Further, all cigar smokers, whether they inhale or not, expose their lips, tongue and throat to smoke and its toxic and cancer-causing chemicals. Moreover, many youth and adult users are now smoking cigars, especially “small” or “little” cigars, with full inhalation, just like cigarettes.

According to the National Cancer Institute’s Monograph No. 9, smoking cigars causes serious health consequences.<sup>5</sup> For example:

- > Cigar smoking causes cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung.
- > Daily cigar smokers, particularly those who inhale, have an increased risk of heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- > Cigar smokers are also at increased risk for an aortic aneurysm.
- > Cigar smokers have higher rates of lung cancer, heart disease, and lung disease than nonsmokers.
- > Male cigar smokers are up to eight times more likely to die from oral cancer and ten times more likely to die from laryngeal cancers than nonsmokers.

**Harms from Secondhand Cigar Smoke.** Because most cigars are larger, a person smoking a regular cigar creates much more air pollution than a cigarette smoker. But even in equal amounts, cigar smoke contains substantially higher levels of carbon monoxide and other toxins than cigarette smoke. At the same time, to the extent that cigar smoke is not inhaled as deeply as cigarette smoke, secondhand cigar smoke is also less “filtered” than secondhand cigarette smoke before bystanders are exposed to it.<sup>6</sup>

**Recent Increases in Cigar Smoking and Youth Use.** As noted previously, while cigarette smoking has been gradually declining in the United States, cigar smoking has recently increased dramatically. More importantly, cigar smoking is not limited to adults; it is the second most common form of tobacco use among youth.<sup>7</sup> Among high school students, while cigarette smoking declined between 2005 and 2009, cigar smoking over the same time period remained the same.<sup>8</sup>

- > The most recent data available show that 14 percent of high school students currently smoke cigars (18.6% among boys; 8.8% among girls).<sup>9</sup>

- > Each day, nearly 3,000 kids under 18 years old try cigar smoking for the first time (compared to the almost 4,000 who try cigarettes for the first time each day).<sup>10</sup>
- > In some states, cigar smoking among some youth groups is even more popular than cigarette smoking. In Massachusetts, 18 percent of high school boys currently smoke cigarettes, but 22 percent smoke cigars.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, a study in Ohio found cigars to be the most popular tobacco product among high school students.<sup>12</sup>
- > Adolescents who start smoking with cigars were more susceptible to smoking cigarettes, and those who smoke both cigars and cigarettes are more likely to be frequent dual users.<sup>13</sup>

**Cigars with Kid-Attracting Flavors.** One reason youth cigar smoking rates are high is because cigars are being marketed in a range of kid-attracting flavors, such as candy, fruit and chocolate.<sup>14</sup> For example, Swisher Sweets blunts come in flavors such as chocolate and strawberry and Phillies Sugarillo Cigarillos are advertised with the tagline, “when sweet isn’t enough.” These products are cheap, flavored products that appeal to youth – national survey data show that Phillies and Swisher Sweets are two of the top three most popular cigar brands among youth aged 12-17.<sup>15</sup> But the inaccurate belief that cigars are much less harmful than cigarettes is also part of the problem. Interviews with college students, for example, found that some smoked little cigars because they believed they were less addictive and less harmful than cigarettes.<sup>16</sup>

**Cigars are Under Taxed & Less Restricted.** The federal government and almost all of the states compound these problems by sharply under-taxing cigars compared to cigarettes, often making smaller cigars a less-expensive alternative to cigarettes. Moreover, many laws and restrictions pertaining to cigarettes – such as federal laws banning flavored cigarettes, blocking illegal Internet sales and restricting cigarette marketing – do not apply to cigars.\*

**Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, December 21, 2011 / Ann Boonn**

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<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute (NCI), *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9*, 1998. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

<sup>2</sup> USDA Economic Research Service, *Tobacco Briefing Room*, Tables 1 and 3, April 2007.

<sup>3</sup> National Cancer Institute (NCI), *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends*, Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9, 1998, <http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/9/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Rodriguez, J, et al., “The Association of Pipe and Cigar Use with Cotinine Levels, Lung Function, and Airflow Obstruction: A Cross-sectional Study,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 152:201-210, 2010; McDonald, LJ, et al, “Deposition of Cigar Smoke Particles in the Lung: Evaluation with Ventilation Scan Using <sup>99m</sup>Tc-Labeled Sulfur Colloid Particles,” *Journal of Nuclear Medicine* 43:1591-1595, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> NCI, *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends*, 1998. See also, Baker, F, et al., “Health Risks Associated with Cigar Smoking,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 284(6):735-740, 2000;

<sup>6</sup> NCI, *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends*, 1998 at chapters 3 and 5. Rodriguez, J, et al., *Annals of Internal Medicine* 152:201-210, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> CDC, “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009,” *MMWR* 59(SS-5), June 4, 2010. Cigars are defined as cigars, cigarillos or little cigars.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 59(SS-5), June 4, 2010. Cigars are defined as cigars, cigarillos or little cigars.

<sup>9</sup> CDC, “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009,” *MMWR* 59(SS-5), June 4, 2010. Cigars are defined as cigars, cigarillos or little cigars.

<sup>10</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), HHS, *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH: Summary of National Findings*.

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\* Some cigarettes also enjoy the lower taxes and fewer restrictions placed on cigars by taking advantage of loopholes in the “cigarette” and “cigar” definitions in federal and state laws and masquerading as “little cigars” or “filtered cigars.”

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<http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k10NSDUH/tabs/Sect4peTabs10to11.pdf>. Cigars are defined as cigars, cigarillos or little cigars.

<sup>11</sup> CDC, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009," *MMWR* 59(SS-5), June 4, 2010. Cigars are defined as cigars, cigarillos or little cigars.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, A, et al., "Cigars, Cigarettes, and Adolescents," *American Journal of Health Behavior* 32(6):640-649, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, A, et al., "Cigars, Cigarettes, and Adolescents," *American Journal of Health Behavior* 32(6):640-649, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Lewis, M, et al., "Dealing with an Innovative Industry: A Look at Flavored Cigarettes Promoted by Mainstream Brands," *American Journal of Public Health* 96(2), February 2006.

<sup>15</sup> SAMHSA, *Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Jolly, DH, "Exploring the use of little cigars by students at a historically black university," *Preventing Chronic Disease* 5(3):1-9, July 2008, [http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/jul/07\\_0157.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/jul/07_0157.htm).