

Switching between menthol and nonmenthol cigarettes: Findings from the U.S. Cohort of the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: This article examines trends in switching between menthol and nonmenthol cigarettes, smoker characteristics associated with switching, and associations among switching, indicators of nicotine dependence, and quitting activity.

METHODS: Participants were 5,932 U.S. adult smokers who were interviewed annually as part of the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey between 2002 and 2011. Generalized estimating equations (GEEs) were used to examine the prevalence of menthol cigarette use and switching between menthol and nonmenthol cigarettes (among 3,118 smokers who participated in at least 2 consecutive surveys). We also evaluated characteristics associated with menthol cigarette use and associations among switching, indicators of nicotine dependence, and quitting activity using GEEs.

RESULTS: Across the entire study period, 27% of smokers smoked menthol cigarettes; prevalence was highest among Blacks (79%), young adults (36%), and females (30%). Prevalence of switching between menthol and nonmenthol cigarettes was low (3% switched to menthol and 8% switched to nonmenthol), and switchers tended to revert back to their previous type. Switching types was not associated with indicators of nicotine dependence or quit attempts. However, those who switched cigarette brands within cigarette types were more likely to attempt to quit smoking.

CONCLUSIONS: While overall switching rates were low, the percentage who switched from menthol to nonmenthol was significantly higher than the percentage who switched from nonmenthol to menthol. An asymmetry was seen in patterns of switching such that reverting back to menthol was more common than reverting back to nonmenthol, particularly among Black smokers.

Recommended Citation

Kasza, K.A., Hyland, A., Bansal-Travers, M., Vogl, L.M., Chen, J., Evans, S.E., Fong, G.T., Cummings, K.M., O'Connor, R.J. (2014). Switching between menthol and nonmenthol cigarettes: Findings from the U.S. Cohort of the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 16 (9), 1255-1265.

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