

## **Top Facts: Cigars**

There is no good alternative and no safe way to use tobacco. All tobacco products contain nicotine, are addictive, and can cause cancer, even cigars.

### **The Difference Between Cigars and Cigarettes**

- Cigars and cigarettes contain the same addictive, toxic, and cancer-causing chemicals such as arsenic and benzene.<sup>1</sup>
- Cigars can range in length from 4.5 to 6 inches long.
- The width of cigars can vary, but can be up to three times as thick as a cigarette.
- The bigger the cigar, the more tobacco it contains.<sup>2</sup>
- A single cigar can take 1-2 hours to smoke, whereas a cigarette usually takes more than 10 minutes to smoke.<sup>1</sup>
- The majority of people who smoke cigars do not inhale, but cancer and addiction are still a major risk.<sup>3</sup>

### **Cigar Smoke Inhalation and Cancer**

- If you do not inhale the smoke, the chance of developing lung cancer is slightly lower than if you do inhale. However, you may still develop other cancers.<sup>1</sup>
- The most significant cancer risk associated with cigar smokers who do not inhale is oral cancer:
  - Cancer of the lips, gums, tongue, floor of the mouth and cheek
- Cigar smokers may also develop cancer of the larynx.
  - This type of cancer often destroys the ability to talk. Those who have this cancer may need to have a special hole placed in their trachea in order to breathe.
- Other cancer risks include the following:
  - Cancer of the esophagus
  - Cancer of the pancreas
  - Lung cancer
    - Cigar smokers who do not inhale still have twice the risk of developing lung cancer as nonsmokers.
    - Cigar smokers who moderately inhale cigar smoke from 5 cigars a day have the same risk of developing lung cancer as a pack-a-day cigarette smoker.<sup>2</sup>

### **Cigar Inhalation and Addiction**

- Nicotine can be absorbed through the lining in the mouth or through the lungs.
- Addiction is a risk whether the cigar smoke is inhaled or not inhaled because it is so easily absorbed in the mouth.

### **Cigars and Secondhand Smoke**

- Because cigars have more tobacco than cigarettes, they produce a greater amount of secondhand smoke.
- Compared to cigarettes, the concentrations of tar, ammonia, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide are higher in secondhand cigar smoke.<sup>4</sup>

## Cigars and Blunts

- The word blunt refers to a particular size of cigar.
- Traditionally, a blunt was an inexpensive, machine-rolled cigar.
- Today, blunt is often used as a slang word that refers to either marijuana rolled in cigar paper or a mix of marijuana and tobacco rolled in cigar paper.

## Black and Milds

- Black and Milds are a particular type of cigar that are short and narrowly shaped.
- They contain pipe tobacco and are smoked from plastic tips.
- They contain more nicotine than a cigarette; thus, if inhaled, Black and Milds could lead to more nicotine exposure.<sup>5</sup>
- They come in a variety of flavors, including Black and Mild *Mild*, Black and Mild *Cherry*, Black and Mild *Apple*, and Gold and Mild.
- African Americans have a higher rate (54%) of smoking Black and Milds than any other group.<sup>6</sup>

## Who smokes cigars?

- 10.4% of 18-24 year olds smoked a cigar in the last month<sup>7</sup>
- Of college students, 37.1% reported they had smoked a cigar at least once in their life.<sup>8</sup>
- Middle school: 6%<sup>9</sup>
- High school: 14.8%<sup>7</sup>
- Adults (18 & older): 5.5%<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Lung Association. (2004, November). Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvlu900e&b=39859](http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvlu900e&b=39859)

<sup>2</sup> National Cancer Institute. (2000, March). Questions and answers about cigar smoking and cancer. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Tobacco/cigars>

<sup>3</sup> Lung Cancer Option and Bio Immune. (2005, July). Cigar smoking. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [http://lung.bioimmune.com/no\\_smoking/cigar/index.asp](http://lung.bioimmune.com/no_smoking/cigar/index.asp)

<sup>4</sup> National Institute of Health. (1998, April). Background on cigar monograph: Cigars: Health effects and trends. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at <http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/apr98/nci-10a.htm>

<sup>5</sup> NetWellness. (2006, July). Smoking and tobacco, about Black and Milds. Retrieved August 23, 2006 from the World Wide Web at <http://www.netwellness.org/question.cfm/40539.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005, December). Tobacco brand preferences fact sheet. Retrieved August 23, 2006 from the World Wide Web at [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/factsheets/Tobacco\\_Brand\\_Preferences\\_Factsheet.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/factsheets/Tobacco_Brand_Preferences_Factsheet.htm)

<sup>7</sup> SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Office of Applied Studies: Tobacco use. Retrieved July 1, 2005, from the World Wide Web at <http://www.samhas.gov/NHSDA/2k1NHSDA/vol1/Chapter4.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Center for the Advancement of Health. (2000). Tobacco use common among college students; cigarette use most common; cigar use also substantial. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the World Wide Web at [www.cfah.org/hbns/newsrelease/tobacco8-8-00.cfm](http://www.cfah.org/hbns/newsrelease/tobacco8-8-00.cfm)

<sup>9</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2004, September). Cigar fact sheet. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the world wide web at [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/factsheets/cigars\\_factsheets.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/factsheets/cigars_factsheets.htm)