

# RESEARCH NEWS

## Flavored Cigars Luring Teens and Young Adults

Rutgers study may help lead to ban of flavored cigars

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By Robin Lally

The popularity of flavored cigars – chocolate, strawberry, fruit punch and pink berry – is largely responsible for the explosive growth in cigar sales over the last few years and is undermining efforts to reduce smoking.

Cristine Delnevo, director of the [Center for Tobacco Studies at the School of Public Health](#), said a [Rutgers study](#) found that the popularity of flavors such as these is luring young people to smoke cigars.

"The cigar market is the most heavily flavored of all tobacco products and for decades, tobacco industry internal documents have highlighted that flavors appeal to youth and young people," said Delnevo who is also co-leader of the [Cancer Prevention and Control Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey](#). "What we found was that the preference for flavored brands was high among females, minorities and young people."

Peter Hamm, a spokesman for the [Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#), said national surveys indicate that everyday more than 2,700 kids try cigar smoking for the first time.

"Dr. Delnevo's research adds important evidence that flavored cigars are significantly more popular among young people, indicating that these products are undermining overall efforts to reduce smoking among kids," Hamm said.

Delnevo is hoping that the information compiled in the study will be used to convince the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) to adopt regulations that would, similar to cigarettes, ban flavoring in cigars.

The FDA recently proposed new rules to assert its authority over cigars, pipe tobacco and e-cigarettes like it already does for cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. The new proposal does not ban flavoring in cigars and e-cigarettes but does require tobacco producers to provide the FDA with a list of their ingredients, manufacturing processes and any research data available.

Delnevo said information demonstrating that flavoring appeals to young people would have to first be provided to the FDA before new regulations banning flavors could be adopted. Flavors in cigarettes were banned under the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act because of their appeal to young people.

"Our recently published research on cigars identified specific demographic groups such as youth and young adults that were more likely to report preference for flavored cigar brands," Delnevo said. "We think the information will likely be used by policy makers and advocates to encourage the FDA to ban flavors in cigars."

In the study, Delnevo and her team analyzed a national survey of Americans ages 12 and up, focusing on 6,700 survey respondents who reported smoking cigars in the

previous month. Using market scanner data, researchers found that preference for flavored cigar brands was highest among young people, females and minorities.

Of those who smoked cigars, 94 percent of females reported smoked a flavored brand, compared with 70 percent male. When it came to age, 95 percent of 12-17 year olds reported that they smoked a flavored brand compared to 63 percent of those aged 35 and older. In addition, black cigar smokers preferred flavored cigars over white and Hispanic smokers and those who smoked marijuana were more likely to use flavored cigars to replace the tobacco with the marijuana.

“These results didn’t surprise us especially since females and young people tend to smoke menthol cigarettes because it masks the harshness of tobacco,” Delnevo said. The proposed regulations that would give the FDA regulatory authority over cigars and e-cigarettes are open for public comment until the beginning of July. The FDA is asking for research and public comment on a variety of questions including what additional actions, if any, should FDA take to address the sale of candy and/or fruit-flavored tobacco products to children and young adults?

They need to determine if those who smoke flavored tobacco products are likely to start smoking cigarettes or become dual users of cigarettes and cigars because they are first being enticed by the flavor.

“Once the FDA completes the regulatory process to gain authority over cigars, it will allow them to propose additional regulations, like banning flavors, to prevent youth tobacco use and protect the public’s health provided that they have a strong scientific evidence base,” Delnevo said. “Our research is highly relevant to future regulations related to cigars.”

<http://news.rutgers.edu/research-news/flavored-cigars-luring-teens-and-young-adults/20140513#.U49TOxa5dFx>