



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Our press releases are available in downloadable PDF format at our Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. The webpage also includes an Experts Database with healthcare professionals and researchers from every region of New York State. Please contact us anytime to arrange an interview with any of our experts or Success Story participants.*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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- *A statewide ban on flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, could increase quit-attempts*
- *Menthol cigarettes disproportionately endanger Black communities and youth*
- *The New York State Smokers' Quitline continues to provide free and personalized resources for all those seeking to quit commercial tobacco and to improve their health*

## **MENTHOL CIGARETTES CAN HASTEN ADDICTION AND COMPLICATE QUIT-ATTEMPTS**

*Newly proposed policy to ban sales of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, could prompt more NYS residents to use Quitline services*

**Feb. 16, 2023** – Ammonia. Formaldehyde. Arsenic. When wrapped inside a menthol cigarette (*image from [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)*), fumes from these and other deadly chemicals become more palatable to inhale. Approximately [1.7 million](#) New York State residents still smoke, and flavored tobacco products such as menthol cigarettes make it easier to become addicted and [harder to quit](#).



The team at the **New York State Smokers' Quitline** (Quitline), which has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000, continues to closely monitor a proposed policy as part of the New York State 2024 Executive Budget that would [ban the sale](#) of all flavored commercial tobacco products, including

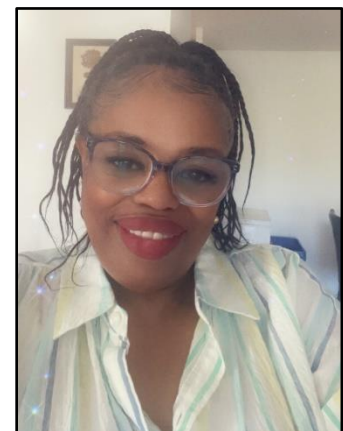
menthol cigarettes. Sarah Pearson-Collins, the Quitline’s director of training development and support, understands the added challenges of assisting someone who uses these products.



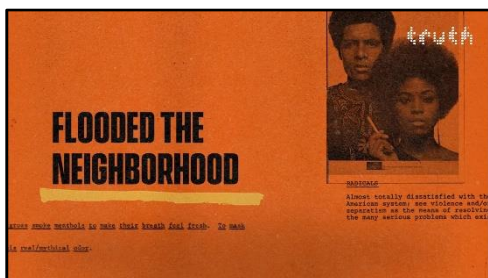
“Adding menthol flavoring to cigarettes makes smoking more palatable by numbing the throat to allow a deeper inhalation,” Pearson-Collins (*pictured*), said. “Those who smoke menthol cigarettes have an added barrier in their quit-journey beyond simply overcoming what they perceive to be a smooth, minty flavor. Menthol produces an additional layer to the addictive nature of nicotine by binding to brain receptors and changing how the brain responds. Our certified tobacco treatment specialists are trained to provide an individualized approach with Quitline participants by identifying smoking patterns and understanding harmful behaviors.”

With [28,000 New York State residents dying every year](#) from smoking-attributed causes and hundreds of thousands more suffering a [variety of negative health effects](#), the proposed flavor ban could provide another impetus for those considering to initiate a quit-attempt.

Former smoker and Quitline participant [Betty E.](#) (*pictured*) of Brooklyn smoked menthol cigarettes for nearly 36 years. Now age 61, she has enjoyed a year of being free from commercial tobacco use and wishes the same for others struggling to quit.



“The menthol flavor made it so much harder to quit and it was easy to get hooked on from the first try,” Betty said. “These cigarettes ultimately control your everyday life and trick your brain into thinking they’ll relieve you of psychological distress.”



National advocates contend the ban of menthol sales addresses a [racial justice issue](#) and acts as a [deterrent for youth smoking](#). *[NOTE TO MEDIA: Click the image at left for a 30-second overview of menthol cigarettes and intentional profiling of Black communities.]* Locally, New York State’s Tobacco

Control Program amplifies similar messages through a media and community advocacy campaign called “It’s Not Just,” with information available at <https://notjustmenthol.org>. The campaign promotes the Quitline as a resource for those seeking to become free from using commercial tobacco.

“Our specialists are available seven days a week to provide personalized support for those who wish to no longer smoke or vape,” said Pearson-Collins. “To help people on their journey to better health, we’re able to provide nearly all adult Quitline participants with a starter supply of free nicotine replacement therapy medications – such as nicotine patches, nicotine gum or nicotine lozenges, shipped right to their home address.”

The team at the New York State Smokers’ Quitline remains ready to support anyone seeking assistance to overcome addiction to smoking and/or vaping. To connect to the Quitline, New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487), text QUITNOW to 333888 and visit [nysmokefree.com](http://nysmokefree.com).

### **About the New York State Smokers’ Quitline**

The New York State Smokers’ Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation and has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000. The Quitline encourages tobacco and vape product users to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for medication support. All New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) or text QUITNOW to 333888 for coaching and resources, free of charge, seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. Visit [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com) for more information.

### **About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is a community united by the drive to eliminate cancer’s grip on humanity by unlocking its secrets through personalized approaches and unleashing the healing power of hope. Founded by Dr. Roswell Park in 1898, it is the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in Upstate New York. Learn more at [www.roswellpark.org](http://www.roswellpark.org), or contact us at 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or [ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org](mailto:ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org).

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