

## Cigars

A cigar is a roll of tobacco wrapped in leaf tobacco or in a substance that contains tobacco. The main difference between cigars and cigarettes is that cigarettes are wrapped in paper and cigars are wrapped in material that contains tobacco. Cigars are less regulated than cigarettes in the United States. For example, fruit and candy flavors can be added to cigars, but not cigarettes. Cigars can be sold singly or in smaller packages than cigarettes, and are often taxed at a lower rate. Single cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos are common starter tobacco products for youth, largely because they are available in flavors, for low prices and have been heavily marketed by the tobacco industry.



Although some people think cigars are less harmful than cigarettes, this is false! Smoking a large cigar can be the same as smoking an entire pack of cigarettes. One large cigar may contain more than a half an ounce of tobacco and can take from 1 to 2 hours to smoke. Large cigars can be hollowed out to contain marijuana, called blunts. Small or "little cigars" look a lot like cigarettes, except for their brown color. Little cigars are the same size as cigarettes, and often have filters. Cigarillos are slightly larger than little cigars. People tend to smoke cigarillos and inhale them like cigarettes. Flavors that increase appeal of cigars to children are added to many cigar products.

### Who is smoking cigars?

About 5% of U.S. adults smoke cigars. Cigars are popular among youth; 9% of boys and 6% of girls in high school and over 2% of middle school students reported current cigar use in the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey. 42% were smoking flavored cigars. Over 12% of African American middle and high schoolers reported current use of cigars.

### Is cigar smoking dangerous?

Yes. Cigars contain the same harmful toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in cigarettes. Regular cigar smoking can cause lung diseases such as COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The risk is even higher in those

who also drink alcohol. They are at higher risk for lung cancer as well as cancer of the esophagus, lip, tongue, mouth, and throat. People who smoke cigars also have an increased risk for heart disease. Cigar smoking is linked to gum disease and tooth loss. Tobacco use can lead to sexual impotence in men. Cigar smoke, like cigarette smoke, is harmful to pregnant women and their fetuses and babies. Exposure to tobacco and nicotine in the womb and after birth increases the risk for many health problems, including stillbirth, premature birth, low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, wheezing and asthma, learning disabilities, and cancer.

### What about secondhand and third hand cigar smoke?

Cigars contain more tobacco than cigarettes and often burn for a longer period, resulting in greater amounts of secondhand smoke (See the ATS Patient Information Series handout on Second and Third Hand Smoke at [www.thoracic.org/patients](http://www.thoracic.org/patients)). It includes smoke from the burning end of the cigar as well as the smoke that the smoker exhales. Others can directly breathe in this secondhand smoke. The smoke and its poisons are absorbed onto walls, carpeting, furniture, and other items. Children and pets are exposed to this "third hand" smoke when they touch contaminated surfaces or when they inhale chemicals released into the air from cigar smoke.

### How can I stop smoking cigars?

Anyone can stop smoking tobacco. Many people have nicotine dependence, meaning that they need nicotine to feel normal. Nicotine withdrawal can be managed with help. FDA-approved medications can make it much easier to stop smoking cigars and other forms of tobacco. The goal of treatment is to help you feel normal when not using tobacco. Nicotine patches, nicotine gum, and nicotine lozenges are available over-the-counter without a prescription. Other medications such as varenicline (brand: Chantix) and bupropion (brands: Zyban, Wellbutrin) are available by prescription. Electronic cigarettes are not recommended as they have not been shown to be effective in stopping tobacco use and there are increasing concerns about their health risks. For more information on electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) see ATS handout at [www.thoracic.org/patients/](http://www.thoracic.org/patients/).



*Cheap flavored cigars that are popular with youth are sold in many convenience stores and supermarkets.*

Adapted from Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

### Cigars and Taxes

In most states, taxes on cigars are less than taxes on cigarettes. They can be sold as individual cigars, for as little as 50 cents, or in smaller packages than cigarettes. Lower prices make many cigars attractive to youth. Raising taxes on all forms of tobacco, including cigars, is one of the best ways to reduce smoking and protect our children.

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## Rx Action Steps

- ✓ Talk to your children about the importance of being tobacco and nicotine free. Start from a young age—as soon as they can understand the concepts.
- ✓ Remember that cigar smoke is hazardous to your health and those around you.
- ✓ Keep all tobacco smoke away from others, especially children.
- ✓ Set a date and stop smoking all forms of tobacco including cigars.
- ✓ If you have a lapse when trying to stop, learn from it. Don't give up! Keep trying.
- ✓ Talk to your healthcare provider and get treatment for nicotine dependence.
- ✓ Find a local smoking cessation program by visiting <http://www.quitnet.com>.
- ✓ Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) for telephone counseling and information about help for stopping smoking in your state.

Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:

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## Additional Resources

### American Thoracic Society

- <https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/why-do-i-smoke.pdf>
- *Smell and Tell! Kids Respond to Candy-Flavored Tobacco* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfOixCuWHbU>

### Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

- *The Rise of Cigars And Cigar-Smoking Harms* <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/microsites/flavortrap/#summary>
- *FDA Should Continue to Regulate All Cigars to Protect Public Health and Prevent Youth Use* [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2018\\_03\\_23\\_fda](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2018_03_23_fda)

### National Cancer Institute

- <https://smokefree.gov/>

### American Lung Association

- <https://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/i-want-to-quit/>

### US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- *CDC Smoking & Tobacco Use—Cigars* [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/tobacco\\_industry/cigars/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/cigars/index.htm)

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