

WHO calls for urgent action to ban flavoured tobacco and nicotine products

On World No Tobacco Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) today launches a new publication and calls on governments to urgently ban all flavours in tobacco and nicotine products, including cigarettes, pouches, hookahs and e-cigarettes, to protect youth from addiction and disease.

Flavours like menthol, bubble gum and cotton candy are masking the harshness of tobacco and nicotine products turning toxic products into youth-friendly bait. Flavours not only make it harder to quit but have also been linked to serious lung diseases. Cigarettes, which still kill up to half of their users, also come in flavours or can have flavours added to them.

“Flavours are fuelling a new wave of addiction, and should be banned,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO. “They undermine decades of progress in tobacco control. Without bold action, the global tobacco epidemic, already killing around 8 million people each year, will continue to be driven by addiction dressed up with appealing flavours.”

The publication, Flavour accessories in tobacco products enhance attractiveness and appeal, reveals how flavours and accessories like capsule filters and click-on drops are marketed to bypass regulations and hook new users.

Currently:

- over 50 countries ban flavoured tobacco;
- more than 40 countries ban e-cigarette sales; 5 specifically ban disposables and 7 ban e-cigarette flavours; and
- flavour accessories remain largely unregulated.

Countries such as Belgium, Denmark, and Lithuania are taking action, and WHO urges others to follow.

Flavours are a leading reason why young people try tobacco and nicotine products. Paired with flashy packaging and social media-driven marketing, they’ve increased the appeal of nicotine pouches, heated tobacco, and disposable vapes into addictive and harmful products, which aggressively target young people.

“We are watching a generation get hooked on nicotine through gummy bear-flavoured pouches and rainbow-coloured vapes,” said Dr Rüdiger Krech, WHO Director of Health Promotion. “This isn’t innovation, it’s manipulation. And we must stop it.”

WHO reiterates that tobacco products, including heated tobacco products, expose users to cancer-causing chemicals and should be strictly regulated.

The 2025 World No Tobacco Day campaign honours governments, youth activists and civil society leaders pushing back against industry interference. “Your actions are changing policy and saving lives,” said Dr Krech.

With around 8 million tobacco-related deaths each year, the time for action is now. Flavours, and the industries that deploy them, have no place in a healthy future.

News Source:

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