



Backgrounder Cigarillo smoking in Canada

What is a cigarillo?

Cigarettes, cigars, cheroots and cigarillos are all tobacco products shaped in a cylinder and designed to be smoked. The law distinguishes between cigarettes and cigars in the following way: a cigarette has paper wrapping and a cigar has wrapping which is made from tobacco. The law makes no distinction between cigars, cheroots and cigarillos, although these are distinct products on the market place.



What laws govern cigarettes?

- Cigarettes must have a health warning that covers no less than 50% of the package surface. They cannot be sold in packages with fewer than 20 cigarettes (i.e. no 'kiddy packs').
- They must have toxic constituent information on the side of the package (tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, formadelhyde, benzene).
- Inside each package there must be a health information message, designed to help smokers quit.
- There are no bans on flavourings on cigarettes, but there are very few cigarettes that are flavoured with anything other than menthol (although Japan Tobacco has recently introduced orange liqueur, rum and whisky flavoured cigarettes).

What laws govern cigars, cheroots and cigarillos?

- These tobacco products, if they are sold in bundles or boxes, must have a health warning whose size varies from 13% to 27%, depending on the size of the package. The health warning does not have to be on both sides of the package.
- If they are sold in individual units, they do not have to have a health warning at all.
- There is no minimum pack size for cigars. Cigars, cigarillos and cheroots can be sold individually or in small 'kiddy packs'
- They do not have to have any toxic constituent labels.
- They do not have to have any health information messages.
- There are no bans on flavourings, and cigarillos are sold in such flavours as: cherry, appletini, cosmo (cranberry with a hint of orange), strawberry, peach, vanilla, raspberry, pina colada, cinnamon, peach, chocolate mint, coconut, wild berry, rum, tangerine, grape.

What are Canada's international treaty obligations with respect to cigars and cigarillos?

The World Health Organization *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* (FCTC), which Canada ratified in November 2004, and which came into force on February 27, 2005 requires that all countries have warning labels that are at least 30% of the package size. These labels must be in place within 3 years of the treaty coming into force (in the case of Canada the deadline was February 27, 2008). These warnings must be on all tobacco products, regardless of whether they are sold in single units or in multiple packages.

Who smokes cigars and cigarillos

There has been relatively little public research into the different markets for different types of cigar products (i.e. cigars, cheroots and cigarillos). Health Canada included questions on cigarillos for the first time in the 2006 wave of its annual smoking survey (the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, or CTUMS). This survey showed that:

- **Cigarillos are a kiddy product.** They are more frequently smoked by teenagers than by adult Canadians. (15% of 15-19 year olds have smoked a cigarillo in the past 30 days compared with 3% of Canadians over 25).
- Teenagers are as likely to try smoking cigarillos as they are to try smoking cigarettes (one third of Canadian teens aged 15-19 have ever tried a cigarette and one third have ever tried a cigarillo).
- Teenaged boys are as likely to have recently smoked a cigarillo as a cigarette (teenage girls half as likely).
- Because traditional measurements of smoking only refer to cigarette smoking, teenagers who smoke cigarillos (but who do not smoke cigarettes) have not been included in measurements of smoking rates. If they are included, teenage smoking rates increase from 15% to 20%.

Why might youth be smoking cigarillos?

- They are affordable (in Ottawa, a single Prime Time cigarillo costs \$1.50 and a package of 4 Twinkle cigarillos costs \$2, compared with a minimum price for a package of cigarettes at \$5.50)
- They are attractive. They are packaged in bright colours and in tubes that resemble markers or lip-gloss.
- They are made with high 'try-me' appeal, with a variety of flavours.
- The packaging suggests that they are not as dangerous as cigarettes, as there are fewer or more inconspicuous health warning messages. In the case of single cigarillo packages, there are no health warnings at all.
- They are easy to find. There are no restrictions on what stores can sell them.

What measures are called for?

- In order for Canada to meet its international obligations under the FCTC, laws or regulations must be amended to require that all tobacco products must be sold with a health warning label that is no smaller than 30% of the principal display areas of the package. This would apply to all cigars, cheroots, cigarillos, chewing tobacco, blunts, etc.
- In order to reduce the affordability of these products for youth, they must be subject to a minimum package size, or minimum price.
- In order to reduce the attractiveness of these products to youth, packaging must be appropriate to the risks of using them. In addition to prominent health warning messages, this could include standardized packaging that prevents them being sold in ways that resemble common-place youth objects, like markers and lip-gloss.
- In order to reduce inducements for youth to try these products, candy, fruit and spice flavourings should be banned.