

## **Cigars!!!**

When you think about cigars, what picture pops into your mind? Do you picture a well-to-do, well-dressed business man puffing on a large, brown stogie? In reality, you should be thinking about your child puffing on a tequila-flavored cigarillo (a small, usually plastic-tipped cigar) or a strawberry-flavored little cigar (packaged in 20, not to be confused with a cigarette pack.) Cigars are the second most common form of tobacco among *kids*.

Part of the reason youth cigar smoking rates are relatively high is due to cigars being marketed in a range of kid-attracting flavors, such as candy, fruit and chocolate. But the inaccurate belief that cigars are much less harmful than cigarettes is also part of the problem. Interviews with college students, for example, found that some smoked little cigars because they believed they were less addictive and less harmful than cigarettes.

### **Are there harmful chemicals in cigar smoke?**

Yes. Cigar smoke, like cigarette smoke, contains toxic and cancer-causing chemicals that are harmful to both smokers and nonsmokers. Cigar smoke is possibly more toxic than cigarette smoke. Cigar smoke has:

- A higher level of cancer-causing substances
- More tar
- A higher level of toxins

To add fuel to the fire, laws and restrictions pertaining to cigarettes or cigarette marketing do not apply to cigars. For example, federal law now prohibits cigarettes from having flavors that attract kids, but does not yet prohibit even small cigars from having such kid-attracting flavors.

Parents and educators need to correct these wrongs by talking to kids about the dangers of cigars and informing them that cigars are *not* a safe alternative to cigarettes. Tobacco in any form increases your risk of cancer, heart disease, and countless other diseases.

Ricki M. Torsch, M.S.A.  
Health Educator  
Macomb County Health Department