



The Use of “Other Tobacco Products” in Chicago and Illinois

INTRO TO “OTPs” – SWEET, CHEAP, & KID-FRIENDLY

“Other tobacco products” (OTPs) are non-cigarette products containing tobacco or nicotine derived from tobacco. OTPs include cigars/cigarillos/little cigars; smokeless tobacco products such as dip, snuff, chewing tobacco, and snus; and pipe and hookah tobacco. Cigarette use has steadily declined in Chicago and Illinois over the last two decades; however, rates of OTP use have remained steady and in some cases have actually increased to the point of equaling current rates of cigarette use. Further, disproportionate rates of cigar and smokeless tobacco use persist in African American, Hispanic, and low socio-economic populations, and among young males. These disproportionate rates of OTP use pose a serious public health concern. Despite the perceptions of many users of OTPs that the products are safer for their health than cigarettes, all tobacco products contain the addictive chemical nicotine and elevate the user’s risk of developing cancer and other chronic disease. OTPs present a unique challenge for public health officials because these products are regulated and taxed differently than traditional cigarettes. The differences in regulation have enabled tobacco manufacturers to sell these products with sweet flavors, in individual packaging, for cheap prices, and through targeted marketing tactics. Addressing these specific tactics through evidence-based tobacco control policy will ensure that the public health gains achieved by reducing cigarette smoking will not be lost via use of other harmful products.



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OTP USE AMONG YOUTH, MALES AND MINORITIES

Youth and Young Adults are Using Cigars/Little Cigars/Cigarillos at Significant Rates

In 2009 – for the first time in Chicago history – adolescent use of cigars/cigarillos/little cigars (cigars, herein) **exceeded** cigarette use.¹ This trend has continued statewide – in 2013 the rate of cigar use among teens statewide rose to 14% and now **equals** the state rate of cigarette smoking.¹ Even though modest declines in teen cigar use have been made over the last 15 years, significant disparities continue to exist between sexes and racial and ethnic minorities. Cigar use continues to be more prominent among males than females, with 12.1% of adolescent males in Chicago reporting current cigar use compared to 6.2% of females.¹ Elevated rates of cigar use also persist in Chicago among African American and Hispanic teens at 8.2% and 10% respectively,

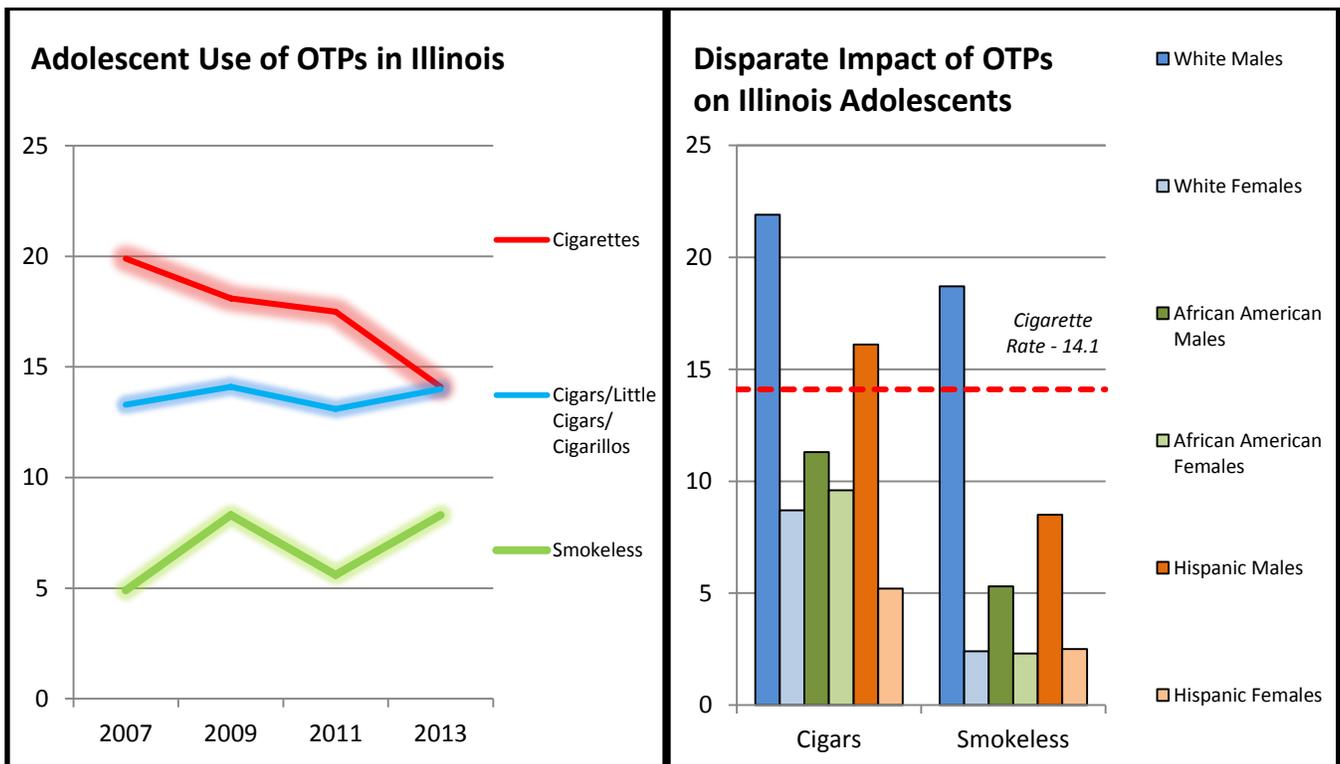
compared to just 7.3% among white teenagers.¹ Within these populations, even larger disparities exist between sexes, with 14.6% of Hispanic males using cigars compared to 5% of females, 9.9% of African American males compared to 6.3% of females.¹

Youth and Young Adult Use of Smokeless Tobacco Remains Persistent

While overall rates of smokeless tobacco use in Chicago and statewide remain relatively low compared to national rates, Chicago adolescent use of smokeless tobacco products has increased by 51% since 2005.¹ This trend can also be seen statewide, with adolescent smokeless tobacco rates increasing by 41% since 2009.¹ Adolescent smokeless tobacco use in Chicago is consistent between racial and ethnic groups (4.5% for African Americans, 4.2% for Hispanics, 4.8% for Caucasians);¹ however large disparities in smokeless tobacco use exist between sexes. Across all racial groups, adolescent male use of smokeless tobacco is more than double that of adolescent females.¹

Hookah Use Is Increasing Among Young People

While hookah use originally started as a cultural activity, it has become an increasingly popular activity for young adults, especially those in college.² Past-year use of hookah among college students has been estimated between 22% and 40%.² Evidence shows that this trend is filtering down to the high schools as well. National data indicates that as of 2010, 1 in 5 high schools boys (17%) and 1 in 6 high schools girls (16%) had used hookah in the past year.² As is the case with many OTPs, there is mounting concern that hookah could serve as an initiation to smoking for young people. A 2014 study of teenage hookah use found that teens who use hookah are two to three times more likely to start smoking cigarettes or to become current smokers than students who had not tried hookah.³



OTP USE CARRIES UNIQUE HEALTH RISKS

One of the most troubling aspects of OTPs is the perceived lack of harm from using them compared to traditional cigarettes. Studies have found that young people generally view OTPs as less harmful than traditional cigarettes.^{4, 5, 6} Lack of federal regulation of cigars and hookah tobacco has only enabled the misinformation around these products to persist. These products all contain nicotine and can serve as a gateway to nicotine addiction. While some OTPs may carry an overall level of reduced harm compared to cigarettes, all tobacco products pose significant health risks.

Cigars, Little Cigars, & Cigarillos

- Cigars contain the same toxic and addictive substances as cigarettes. While cigars are sometimes viewed as safer than cigarettes, the National Cancer Institute advises that cigar users are at a higher risk than nonsmokers of developing lung cancer and heart disease.⁷ Compared to nonsmokers, cigar users' bodies have elevated levels of metabolized nicotine, cadmium and tobacco-specific carcinogens.⁸
- Like cigarettes, regular cigar use can cause cancers of the lung, mouth, esophagus, and larynx. Heavy cigar use or deeper inhalation has also been linked to elevated risk of heart disease and COPD.^{9, 10}
- While many users do not fully inhale cigar smoke in the same manner as cigarette smoke, studies show that users of little cigars and cigarillos inhale the smoke deeper than large cigars, thereby intensifying the health risks linked to cigar use.^{9, 10}
- Cigar use also puts nonsmokers' health at risk. Secondhand smoke from cigars contains considerably higher levels of carbon monoxide and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons than cigarette smoke.¹⁰

Hookah

- Hookah use exposes a user to more smoke over a longer period of time than most typical cigarette smoking sessions.² According to the CDC, the average hookah session results in 200 puffs and approximately 90,000 milliliters of smoke inhaled, while the average cigarette results in 20 puffs and 500-600 milliliters of smoke inhaled. This difference in volume and duration exposes hookah users to considerably higher concentrations of the same deadly toxins found in cigarette smoke.¹¹
- Hookah use has been associated with lung cancer, low birth weight, and periodontal disease.^{2, 12}
- Because the tobacco in hookahs is heated over hot charcoals, it produces a smoke that is high in levels of carbon monoxide, carcinogens, and heavy metals.² A 2014 study found that the levels of the carcinogen benzene are more than 6 fold higher in hookah smoke than in cigarette smoke.¹³ The study likewise found that hookah tobacco and hookah charcoal contain significant amounts of the toxic metals nickel, cadmium, lead, and chromium.
- Hookah use carries with it many of the same health risks as other combustible tobacco products, including heart disease, oral cancer, lung cancer, stomach cancer, esophageal cancer, impaired lung function, and reduced fertility.²

Smokeless Tobacco

- There are 28 carcinogens in smokeless tobacco products.¹⁴ Among these carcinogens are tobacco-specific nitrosamines, polonium-210, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and heavy metals such as arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, lead, nickel and mercury.¹⁵ The amount of these harmful substances can vary widely between smokeless products; the more carcinogens present in a given product, the higher the risk of cancer.¹⁵
- The cancers attributable to smokeless tobacco use include oral, esophageal, and pancreatic cancer.^{14, 15} A 2008 review of previous studies of smokeless tobacco and cancer concluded that smokeless tobacco products raise the risk of developing oral cancer by 80 percent, esophageal cancer by 60 percent, and pancreatic cancer by 60 percent.¹⁶
- Studies have also found associations between smokeless tobacco use and heart disease, gum disease, tooth decay and precancerous oral lesions (leukoplakia).^{14, 15}
- Smokeless tobacco comes in many different forms – chewing tobacco, snuff, snus, dissolvable tobacco – and each product carries relative harm risks. While smokeless tobacco, like cigars, is often seen as a less-harmful alternative to cigarettes, all tobacco products can cause cancer and are addictive.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO INCREASED OTP USE

OTPs are often marketed with sweet flavors, bright colors, and cheap prices.¹⁷ Moreover, some manufactures have manipulated certain OTPs to escape regulations such as bans on the sale of flavored cigarettes and high cigarette taxes.¹⁷

Pricing – Low Taxes, Small Packages, & Price Discounting

Cigars, cigarillos, and little cigars are not taxed at high levels comparable to cigarettes. A pack of cigarettes sold in Chicago can cost as much as \$12/pack, factoring in state, country, and local taxes. However, little cigars can be sold in packs of 3 for \$0.89 – in other words, for the price of a candy bar. Furthermore, cigarettes by law must be sold in packs of 20. Meanwhile, little cigars – often nearly identical to cigarettes in size, shape and appearance – can still be sold in alluring, individual wrappings.



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Additionally, price discounting has become the tobacco industry's leading method of attracting users. It now accounts for the largest percentage of industry marketing expenditures.¹⁸ Typical price discounting measures include dollars-off offers, multi-pack discounts, and buy-some-get-some deals. Price discounting contributes to tobacco-related health disparities because vulnerable populations including young people, racial minorities, and persons with low income are the groups most like to purchase tobacco products via one of the above listed discounts.^{19, 20} Such discounts cause users to purchase larger quantities of a given product, which encourages transitioning from experimental to regular tobacco use.²⁰

Sweet Flavors

While flavored cigarettes were banned by the FDA in 2009, cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos can still be sold in flavors such as grape, strawberry, cherry, chocolate, and vanilla. Flavors can mask the harshness of cigar smoke, making them easier to inhale for new smokers and thereby increasing the perception of their relative harmlessness.²¹ Scans of internal tobacco industry documents suggest the inclusion of flavors was part of an industry effort to blur the line between little cigars, cigarillos, and cigarettes and make the products more appealing to new smokers.²¹



Image Source: Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising

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Targeted Marketing by Tobacco Companies

According to the CDC, the increased visibility of cigar use in society has been the product of a number of marketing strategies, including: celebrity endorsements, the proliferation of cigar-friendly magazines, highly visible images of women smoking cigars, and product placement in movies.²² A recent study found that the top five most frequently smoked brands of cigars all fell into the cigarillo/little cigar category.²³ According to the study, the use of these five brands was most prevalent among young, black, non-Hispanic males with a propensity for risk behaviors.²³ In addition, studies of tobacco company marketing tactics have uncovered that little cigars and cigarillos are more likely to be available in predominantly African American neighborhoods, are significantly cheaper in predominately African American neighborhoods, and are more prevalently advertised on the exterior of retail stores in African American neighborhoods.²⁴

Smokeless tobacco has been marketed to young adults as well, with products such as Skoal Bandits® and Skoal Long Cut® specifically designed to transition new users from mild strength to full bodied products.²⁵ Like cigars, smokeless tobacco has also attracted young users with sweet flavors.²⁵ As of 2005, these sweet variations represent more than 11 percent of total smokeless tobacco sales.²⁵ Smokeless tobacco also benefits from sponsorship at prominent sporting events and ad placement in popular culture magazines.²⁵ Smokeless tobacco advertising expenditures increased by more than 205% between 1998 and 2010.²⁵

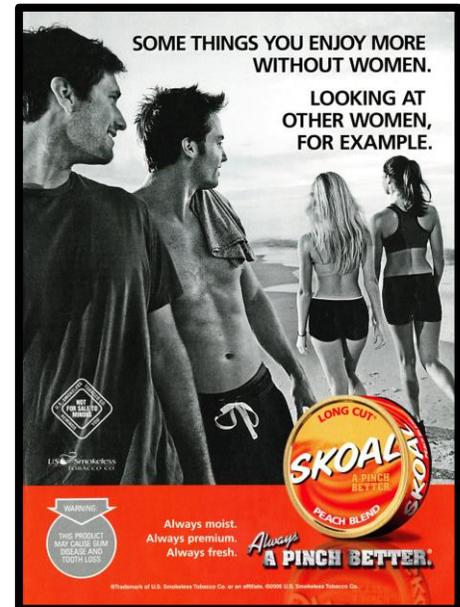


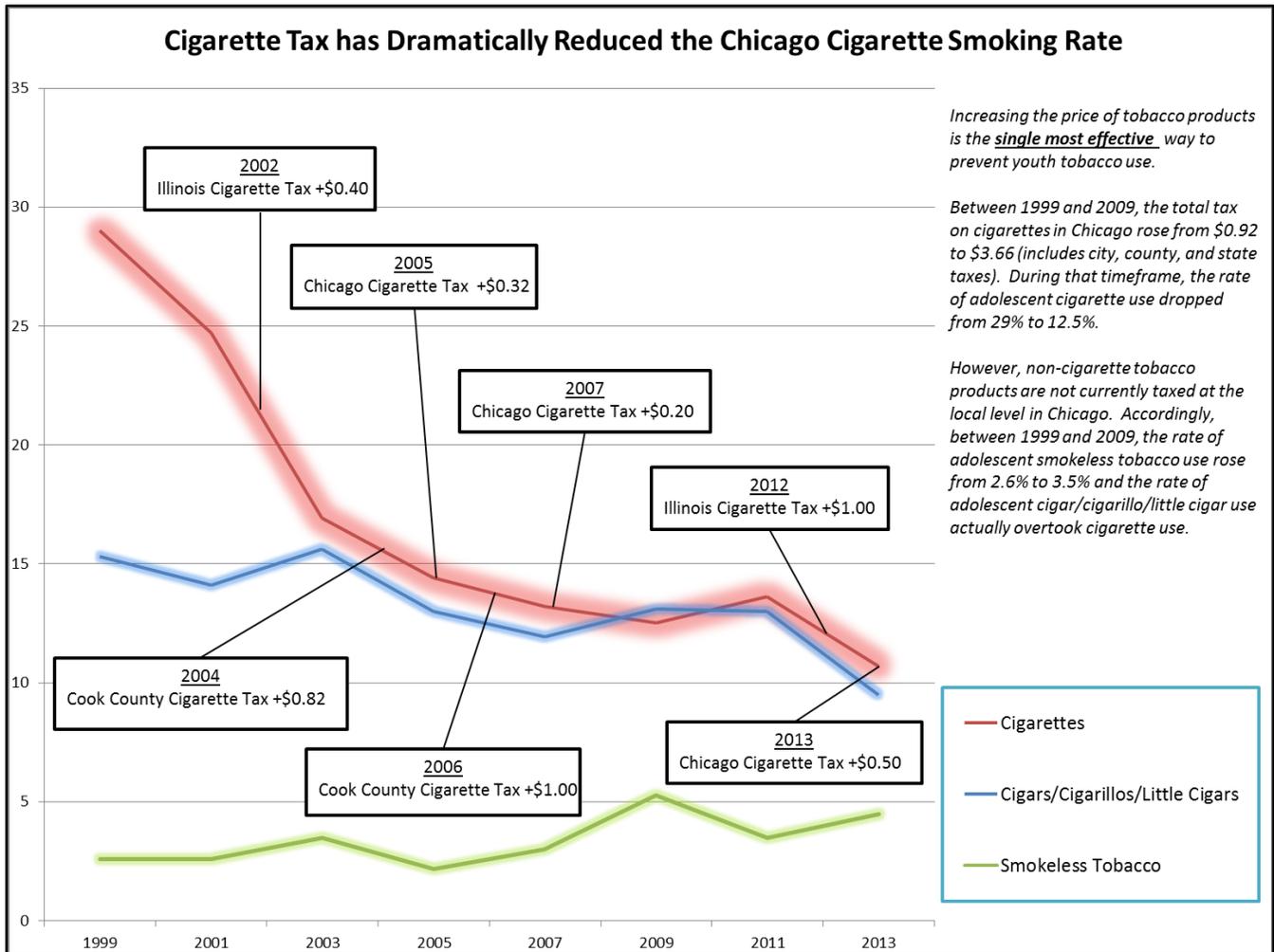
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POLICY SOLUTIONS

Tax: Increasing the price of tobacco products is the single most effective means of curbing youth tobacco use.²⁶ Increasing the price of OTPs is endorsed by both the CDC’s Task Force on Community Preventative Services and the U.S. Surgeon General as an effective strategy for reducing tobacco use.^{19, 27} Increased cigarette taxes have been one of the leading factors in the dramatic decline of teen smoking in Chicago. However, OTPs are taxed under different mechanisms and at significantly lower rates than cigarettes. Options for taxing OTPs include

taxes based on weight or by a fixed percentage of the overall price.^{28, 29} While Illinois can tax OTPs at the state level, it is less clear under the current law whether municipalities that can tax cigarettes can also tax OTPs. If this loophole was closed in the Illinois Municipal Code, the municipalities with taxing authority could put OTPs on the same level playing field as cigarettes. Like cigarettes, increases in OTP price can measurably reduce OTP use. One study found that a 10 percent increase in the price of smokeless tobacco would reduce adult use by nearly four percent and adolescent male use by almost six percent.³⁰



Minimum Price Law: Twenty-five states (Illinois excluded) have formula-based tobacco minimum price laws.³¹ These laws typically establish a minimum percentage above wholesale/retail price that retailers must markup their products. While these laws were originally designed to protect retailers from predatory business practices, a minimum price law in the form of a **price floor**, can also serve to reduce youth tobacco use. In 2014, New York City established a price floor of \$10.50 for little cigars and cigarettes.³² Since the populations most disparately impacted by tobacco are also typically the most price-sensitive, keeping all tobacco products at consistent, high prices is an efficient strategy for addressing OTP use. However, minimum price laws are most effective when paired with a price discounting law.³³

Prohibit Price Discounting: Price discounting has become the tobacco industry’s leading method of attracting users and now accounts for the largest category of industry marketing expenditures.¹⁸ A price discounting law serves to ensure that OTPs don’t around tobacco taxes or minimum price laws. New York City and Providence, RI recently prohibited tobacco retailers from selling tobacco products at a discount, either by buy-some-get-some deals or through multi-pack discounts.^{35, 34} The ordinances also prohibit retailers from redeeming coupons for discounted or free tobacco products. Seven of the states with formula-based minimum price laws also prohibit discounting from minimum price calculations.³⁴

Minimum Packaging Law: Minimum packaging laws require certain tobacco products to be sold in packages containing no less than an established number of units. For example, in New York City, the minimum packaging law requires little cigars, like cigarettes, to be sold in packs of at least 20.³⁵ In addition, the law requires cigarillos to be sold in packs of at least 4. However, the law enables premium, high-end cigars to continue to be sold individually. As mentioned above, little cigars often come in packs of 3 for as low as \$0.89 and are often the same size, shape, and general appearance of cigarettes. Paired with a minimum price law and high excise tax, a minimum packaging law ensures that little cigars don’t act as a loophole to cigarette regulations.

Prohibit the Sale of Flavored OTPs: Recognizing that flavored products are often used by youth to initiate tobacco use and that sweet flavors have been used to lure new users and transition them to stronger products,²⁵ many municipalities are beginning to explore prohibitions on the sale of flavored tobacco, including OTPs. Among the cities that have already passed such ordinances are Chicago, New York City, and Providence, RI.^{35, 36,}³⁷ New York and Providence prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco anywhere except tobacco bars and Chicago restricts the sale of flavored tobacco within 500 feet of a school. This policy option makes it harder for youth to obtain sweet flavored OTPs, yet still leaves avenues for adults to purchase the products.

Funding for OTP Counter Marketing: Tobacco counter-marketing campaigns are an important, but often overlooked component of effective tobacco control programs. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services strongly recommends “mass reach health communication interventions” to reduce tobacco initiation.³⁸ However, few communication efforts have focused exclusively on OTPs. This absence has not gone unnoticed. In 2014, the University of California San Francisco published a comprehensive history of tobacco control in Illinois, which recommended that “[tobacco control] media efforts should shift from promoting just the Illinois Tobacco Quitline to also engaging in broader statewide media campaigns about tobacco, including highlighting the activities of the tobacco industry . . . Such content will have more impact in reducing smoking and saving medical costs to the state budget.”³⁹ An OTP exclusive media campaign in Illinois would be among the first of its kind nationally.

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