



# FACTS ABOUT LIGHT AND MILD CIGARETTES

## ***There is no such thing as a 'safe' cigarette or 'safe' level of consumption<sup>1</sup>***

### **There is no such thing as a 'safe' cigarette**

- Many smokers believe that smoking "light," "mild," "low-tar," or "ultra-light" cigarettes reduces the risk of smoking-related health problems<sup>2</sup>
- In fact, there is no such thing as a 'safe' cigarette or 'safe' level of consumption<sup>1</sup>

### **Misleading labeling**

- Labels on light, mild cigarette packs that indicate lower tar and nicotine levels are misleading on health risk
- The tar and nicotine measurements on light cigarette packs come from 'smoking' machines that measure tar and nicotine levels in cigarettes when smoked by a machine, not a person
- Light, mild cigarettes are designed with ventilation holes in the filters to introduce air and dilute the smoke when the machines puff the cigarette. This dilution leads to artificially low measurements of tar and nicotine<sup>3</sup>
- Unlike smoking machines, smokers tend to cover ventilation holes with their fingers or lips while smoking so that actual intake tar and nicotine is above the levels measured by smoking machines<sup>3</sup>
- Since individuals smoke differently than smoking machines, tar and nicotine levels displayed on cigarette packs do not accurately reflect the actual amounts of tar and nicotine inhaled by the smoker
- Studies measuring intake of tobacco smoke components have found little correlation between nicotine and tar levels as measured by smoking machines and internal exposure levels in smokers as measured by biomarkers<sup>3-9</sup>

### **Compensatory smoking**

- Smokers are addicted to nicotine<sup>10</sup>, and therefore they modify their smoking behavior to compensate for the lower yields of light cigarettes in order to attain enough of a nicotine dose<sup>6</sup>
- Compensatory smoking includes increasing the number of cigarettes smoked a day, taking larger puffs, puffing more frequently, or inhaling more deeply<sup>6</sup>

### **Light cigarettes provide no health benefit to smokers**

- The 2004 U.S. Surgeon General's report concluded that "smoking cigarettes with lower machine-measured yields of tar and nicotine provides no clear benefit to health<sup>11</sup>"
- Cohort studies examining mortality rates over time in the US<sup>11-13</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>14</sup> found that lung cancer mortality among smokers increased rather than decreased over a period of time when tar and nicotine levels of cigarettes as measured by smoke machines were declining

### **Light cigarettes may increase smoking initiation and decrease smoking cessation**

- Marketing light cigarettes as harm reduction products may discourage smokers from quitting, smokers may choose these cigarettes as an alternative to quitting<sup>6</sup>
- The availability of apparently "safer" cigarettes may lead to increased rates of smoking initiation<sup>6</sup>

***The only effective way for smokers to protect themselves from the harmful effects of smoking is to quit smoking completely***

## ***What the Industry Says: Industry Strategies and Statements about Light and Mild Cigarettes from Internal Industry Documents***

### ***Internal documents show that tobacco companies knew the inability of the smoking machine to accurately measure substance levels in tobacco products***

"...all ventilated cigarettes produce higher deliveries during human smoking than during machine smoking..."

-Phillip Morris, 1990<sup>15</sup>

"The smoker profile data reported earlier indicated that Marlboro Lights cigarettes were not smoked like regular Marlboros. In effect, the Marlboro 85 smokers in this study did not achieve any reduction in smoke intake by smoking a cigarette (Marlboro Lights) normally considered lower in delivery."

-Phillip Morris, 1975<sup>16</sup>

### ***Internal documents show that tobacco companies were aware that light and mild cigarettes would not reduce the risk of death and disease***

"If, as claimed by some anti-tobacco critics, the alleged health hazard of smoking is directly related to the amount of 'tar' to which the smoker is exposed per day, and the smoker bases his consumption on nicotine, then a present 'low-tar, low nicotine' cigarette offers zero advantage to the smoker over a 'regular' filter cigarette."

- RJ Reynolds, 1972<sup>17</sup>

### ***Internal industry documents show that tobacco companies use misleading marketing of light and mild cigarettes to discourage quitting***

"All work in this area should be directed towards providing *consumer reassurance* about cigarettes and the smoking habit. This can be provided in different ways, e.g. by claimed low deliveries, by the perception of low deliveries and by the perception of "mildness." Furthermore, advertising for low delivery or traditional brands should be constructed in ways so as not to provoke anxiety about health, but to alleviate it, and to enable the smoker to feel reassured about the habit and confident in maintaining it over time." [emphasis in original]

-British American Tobacco, 1977<sup>15</sup>

## ***The Truth: Conclusions About Light and Mild Cigarettes from the U.S. Department of Justice Suit against Tobacco Companies***

### ***The U.S. Department of Justice found that the tobacco companies misled the public about light and mild cigarettes***

"Defendants falsely marketed and promoted low tar/light cigarettes as less harmful than full-flavor cigarettes in order to keep people smoking and sustain corporate revenues"

"Based on their sophisticated understanding of compensation, defendants internally recognized that low tar/light cigarettes offer no clear health benefit"

"Defendants internally recognized that smokers switch to low tar/light cigarettes, rather than quit smoking, because they are less harmful"

-U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler<sup>18</sup>

#### **FOR ADDITIONAL FACTS ON LIGHT AND MILD CIGARETTES PLEASE REFER TO:**

- National Cancer Institute, Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No 13. *Risks Associated with Smoking Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine*
- National Cancer Institute, Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 7, *The FTC Cigarette Test Method for Determining Tar, Nicotine, and Carbon Monoxide Yields of U.S. Cigarettes.*
- US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004 Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report to the Surgeon General.*

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