



INCREASING THE TOBACCO SALES AGE TO 21

WHY RAISE THE TOBACCO SALES AGE?



The tobacco industry heavily targets young adults ages 18-21 in order to recruit new tobacco users and guarantee profits. Approximately 95 percent of current adult smokers started before they were 21.¹ In Minnesota, no one under 18 years old is allowed to buy tobacco. Youth get tobacco from several sources, including social sources. A 16-year-old has more contact with and access to 18-year-olds who can buy tobacco. However, it is less likely that a 16-year-old would ask a 21-year-old for tobacco. Increasing the age gap between young people and those who can legally buy tobacco will reduce youth access to tobacco.

A 2015 report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) found that increasing the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21 would decrease smoking initiation among 15-17-year-olds by 25 percent.² A Minnesota-specific study looked at the impact of raising the tobacco age and found that 25 percent fewer 15-year-olds would start smoking by the time they turn 18 and 15 percent fewer 18-year-olds would start smoking by the time they turn 18. This translates into 30,000 young people not becoming smokers over the next 15 years.³ If youth don't smoke by the time they are 21, they likely never will.

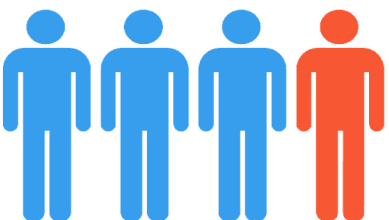


Nicotine is harmful to the development of the adolescent brain.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF NICOTINE ON ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT?

Nicotine is addictive and is particularly harmful to the developing adolescent brain. Evidence suggests that nicotine interferes with brain maturation and can have a long-term effect on cognitive development and mental health.⁴ Even brief or intermittent nicotine exposure during adolescence can cause lasting damage.⁵

The addictive properties of nicotine can lead adolescents to heavier daily tobacco use and a more difficult time quitting later in life.⁶ Nicotine exposure can also increase the risk of addiction to other harmful substances.⁵ The long-term effects of nicotine on the adolescent brain is a significant public health concern.^{7,8}



3 out of 4 adults favor increasing the sales age for tobacco to 21.

WHO SUPPORTS RAISING THE TOBACCO SALES AGE TO 21?

A 2014 national survey showed that 75 percent of adults favor increasing the minimum sales age for tobacco to 21. A national consensus is growing to protect young people from a lifetime of addiction and health problems caused by tobacco by raising the tobacco sale age. In addition, 70 percent of current smokers and 65 percent of those age 18-24 support raising the minimum tobacco sales age.⁹