



INCREASING THE TOBACCO SALE AGE TO 21



WHY RAISE THE TOBACCO SALE 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 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.

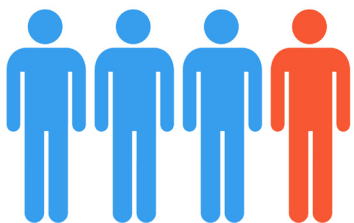


Nicotine is harmful to the development of the adolescent brain.

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 sale age for tobacco to 21.

WHO SUPPORTS RAISING THE TOBACCO SALE AGE TO 21?

A 2014 national survey shows that 75 percent of adults favor increasing the minimum sale 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 sale age.⁹

"Raising the legal minimum age for cigarette purchaser to 21 could gut our young adult market where we sell about 25 billion cigarettes and enjoy a 70 percent market share."

Philip Morris report, 1986

IS YOUTH TOBACCO USE STILL A PROBLEM?

The progress made in youth tobacco prevention over the past 10 years is diminishing with rising numbers of youth using vaping products. According to the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, one in four Minnesota 11th graders reported using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days. This is a 50 percent increase from 2016. Additionally, 72 percent of 11th graders report getting e-cigarettes from friends.¹⁰ Policies such as raising the tobacco sales age to 21 address the social sources through which youth access these products.

WHAT CAN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO?

Nineteen states have raised the age to 21 since 2016. In Minnesota, 72 communities have raised the age to 21, joining 500-plus nationwide. On Dec. 20, 2019, President Trump signed Tobacco 21 into federal law. Raising the national tobacco sales age to 21 is a victory for youth and health, but state and local action is still needed to maximize health benefits.

MINNESOTA'S 72 TOBACCO 21 COMMUNITIES



The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota is dedicated to reducing the human and economic costs of tobacco use in Minnesota.

2395 University Avenue W, Suite 310
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-646-3005 | www.ansrmn.org

Sources may be found at www.ansrmn.org

Updated: March 2020

