

Health Snapshot

Raising the Age to Buy Tobacco

It's too easy for young people in Vermont to get tobacco.

National data show that about 95% of adults who smoke started before they turned 21. The 18-21 age range is a time when many people who smoke transition to regular use of cigarettes – about 80% of adults who smoke became daily smokers before 21.¹

55%

of Vermont high school students say it's very easy or sort of easy to get cigarettes.²

“ I see kids at school using JUUL in the bathroom or classroom. I ask them why they use it and they say, ‘It’s cool.’ I ask them if they know it contains nicotine. They say, ‘What does it matter? It gives me a hit.’ ”
– Essex High School Student

We can build on ongoing tobacco prevention efforts.

- The Health Department works with community partners and tobacco coalitions around the state to explore local options to reduce youth tobacco exposure and use.
- We develop health communication campaigns to increase perception of harm among youth and young adults who are susceptible to targeted tobacco industry advertising.
- We monitor the effectiveness of other statewide strategies, including restricting tobacco sales in pharmacies and around schools.

CDC and the Institute of Medicine recommend raising the age to buy tobacco, which reduces use among young people.

Increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco is an evidence-based strategy for reducing young people’s access to and use of tobacco. National support for this prevention strategy is strong – three out of four people support this approach, including seven out of ten smokers.³ Six states have already raised the age to 21.

Aligning the legal ages to purchase tobacco, alcohol and marijuana would help streamline enforcement at points-of-sale, and help young people better understand the risk tobacco poses to their health.

Learn more: www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/tobacco

¹ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Increasing the Minimum Legal Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21, 2018, <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0376.pdf>

² Vermont Department of Health. “Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” High School Survey. 2017. Available from: http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_YRBS_HighSchool_2017.pdf

³ King, Brian A., Jama, AO, Marynak, KL, and Promoff GR, “Attitudes Toward Raising the Minimum Age of Sale for Tobacco Among U.S. Adults,” American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2015, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749379715002524>