

## Belmont Raises Age for Tobacco, E-Cig Sales to 21 in 2015

Franklin B.  
Tucker

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Joining surrounding towns and large municipalities like New York City, Belmont will prohibit the sale of all tobacco products and nicotine delivery devices such as e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 21 beginning on Jan. 1, 2015.

The move approved unanimously by the Belmont Board of Health at an afternoon meeting on Wednesday; Sept. 17, also impose guidelines on the sale of flavored cigar wrappers and associated products favored by younger buyers to make smoking more enjoyable.

Anti-smoking advocates believe the new regulations will place a damper on older teens and young adults from experimenting with smoking when they are vulnerable to becoming addicted to tobacco.

“Needham has had a 21 [limit] for a decade and the smoking rates for kids there has gone down,” said Stephen Shestakofsky of Edwards Street who has long been an anti-smoking advocate.

“We know that if you become addicted to tobacco at a younger age, it is much, much harder to quit. So this will make it harder for teens to ‘cheat’,” said Shestakofsky.

Belmont becomes the 30th Massachusetts town or city to adopt the 21 year old sales prohibition.

“We are not going to be an [island] ... where kids say ‘well, I’m not going to you I can go [out of town],” said Dr. David Alper, vice chair of the Board of Health, noting that nearby Arlington, Newton, Winchester and Brookline have existing 21 year old sales restrictions while Waltham and Watertown are currently looking to raise their age limits.

The town also placed nicotine delivery vehicles such as e-cigarettes (which heats nicotine and water into a vapor without the cancerous byproducts from cigarettes) since there has not been long-term studies to show they are either safe while also being seen as a “gateway” to tobacco addiction.

What’s important to note is that the regs are aimed at keeping young adults away from the products. This wouldn’t prevent adults from using it but it will teens,” said Shestakofsky.

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