

# Editorial: Raise the tobacco purchase age to 21

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It's time to raise the age for purchasing tobacco products in Minnesota to 21, up from 18.

It's simple logic.

The best way to reduce the harm of tobacco is to prevent people from starting, and almost 90 percent of addicted adult smokers started by the age of 18.

We all know how big tobacco remains profitable. They need new, healthy people to start smoking because their products kill off the longtime customers at earlier ages than normal.

So they target teenagers with gimmicks such as menthol and candy flavorings, product designs, advertisements and event sponsorships.

A 2014 national survey shows that 75 percent of adults favor increasing the minimum purchase age for tobacco to 21. Even 70 percent of smokers support raising the legal age.

Hawaii and 125 localities in the United States already have raised the purchase age to 21. This includes New York, Boston and Kansas City.

Studies have shown that nicotine is addictive and adolescents are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of tobacco use. Even though eligible to vote at 18, people in their late teens are not full-grown yet, especially their brains.

The reasons to raise the age go on. We hope concerned legislators in Minnesota make a difference in 2017 and put forth a bill to raise the age. Let's get a conversation started — for our children.

And their children. And their children.