

## Massachusetts Town Increases Tobacco Buying Age to 21

City lawmakers include electronic cigarettes in the prohibition.

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MELROSE, Mass. – The city of Melrose has voted to prohibit the sale of tobacco products in any form to anyone under the age of 21 starting July 1, the Melrose Free Press reports. The ordinance encompasses cigarettes, cigars, electronic cigarettes, snuff and all other tobacco products.

“Basically, we think it's beneficial because, number one, if we raise the age like they do with alcohol, we're less apt to have the really young kids starting to smoke,” said Maurine Garipay, a member of the city's Board of Health. “Generally, we feel if [the purchasing age] is 18 and kids are smoking and having other kids buy cigarettes for them, they're apt to start closer to 15, 16 years old.”

However, the change in the law doesn't prohibit minors from smoking within the city limits. “Increasing the age to 21 is part of a growing trend in Massachusetts,” said Ruth Clay, health director for the towns of Melrose, Reading and Wakefield. “There are 21 communities now who have raised the minimum age to either 19 or 21, with additional communities holding hearings all the time. Having four communities in this area — Winchester, Melrose, Wakefield and Reading — shows consistency in the area. It's part of a comprehensive tobacco control effort.”

Recently, [Utah](#) and [Colorado](#) tried to impose a statewide increase in the tobacco-purchasing age, but both efforts failed to pass. [New York City](#) raised the age to 21, which will go into effect next month.