

Boston raises tobacco-buying age to 21

By John R.
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The Walsh administration has raised the age to buy cigarettes and other tobacco products to 21. The change goes into effect on Feb. 15.

The city's Board of Health voted this week to increase the legal age to buy smoking products to 21, a move the administration said adds Boston to the list of more than 85 other communities across the state.

According to the administration, the new rules now require people to be 21 in order to buy tobacco products, e-cigarettes and in order to enter "smoking bars" and adult-only retail tobacco stores. The rules also limit the sale of flavored tobacco and nicotine products other than menthol to adult-only retailers.

"It is our responsibility to do what we can to guide our young people and create a healthier future for all Bostonians," Walsh said in a statement this week. "We know the consequences of tobacco use are real and can be devastating. These changes send a strong message that Boston takes the issue of preventing tobacco addiction seriously, and I hope that message is heard throughout Boston and across the entire country."

According to the administration, research shows that while only 2 percent of retail tobacco sales are to people between the ages of 18 and 21, as much as 95 percent of adult smokers report starting to smoke before they turn 21 years old.

Dr. Huy Nguyen, interim executive director of the Boston Public Health Commission, said smoking is still the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States.

Smoking continues to cause more deaths "than HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle accidents and firearm-related incidents combined," he said in a statement. "Reducing the number of young people who ever start smoking is the single most important thing we can do to promote long-term health."

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