As more states consider raising the smoking age to 21, science weighs in on the pros and cons.

For as long as most people can remember, the legal age to buy and possess tobacco products has been 18 throughout the country. This year, however, that all began to change. Hawaii became the first state in the country to raise the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21 from 18, and California recently passed a bill to do the same.

State legislators voted to pass a bill that would raise California's smoking age from 18 to 21. It was signed by CA governor Jerry Brown and is slated to take effect on January 1, 2017.

Research suggests that people between the ages of 18 and 21 are much more susceptible to developing a smoking habit than those who pick up a cigarette or e-cig later on in life. Many believe this is due to the fact that underage smokers likely have friends or classmates who have surpassed the 18-year-old limit, granting them easy access to the plethora of tobacco products sitting behind most convenience stores' shelves.

High school students are also less likely to have a friend in the 21+ range, making tobacco just as difficult to procure as alcohol for many teens. A recent national survey reveals that a staggering 95 percent of smokers get their start before the age of 21.

California is not alone – both Kansas City and Portland have considered raising the smoking age in an effort to
make tobacco that much more difficult to procure. A large number of smaller towns and cities have already voted to raise the tobacco sale age, and many more are sure to follow.

Scientists believe wholeheartedly that restricting access to cigarettes to people under the age of 21 could drastically reduce the number of smoking related deaths over a generation. If laws can bypass the time period of the highest risk, then fewer people would develop smoking habits and ultimately lead healthier lives.

A press release from the California State Senate describing the details of the bill can be found here.