



Tobacco 21 FAQs

What is the new law?

No one can give, sell, or otherwise distribute cigarettes, other tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or papers used to roll cigarettes to anyone under the age of 21 years old.

Why did Cleveland pass this law?

Raising the minimum age to buy and sell cigarettes and other tobacco products to twenty-one would save lives by preventing adolescents and young adults from ever taking up smoking, according to a recent report by the Ohio State University College of Public Health. Locally, data from the most recent Cuyahoga County Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2013 indicates over 22% of high school students in Cuyahoga County use tobacco products; within the City of Cleveland, rates range between 23.1% on the west side and 25.1% on the east side. Nearly all adult smokers began smoking by the age of eighteen and almost no one starts smoking after twenty-one. Of those who begin smoking as youths, 80% will smoke into adulthood because of the powerful effects of nicotine, and one half of adult smokers will die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases.

What products does this law apply to?

Cigarettes, other tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, and papers used to roll cigarettes.

Will new signage be required for Cleveland stores?

Yes. All tobacco product retailers are required to post – in a place highly visible to customers – a sign that complies with the City of Cleveland law on informing customers of the minimum sales age for these items. The sign to be posted is included in this packet and it also available online at city.cleveland.oh.us.



How will the new legal sales age affect age verification?

Retailers must verify that customers who ask for cigarettes, other tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or papers used to roll cigarettes are at least 21 years old. If a customer looks like he/she is under 30 years old, retailers must ask for proof of age. Any of these documents constitutes acceptable proof of age:

- A valid photo driver's license or non-driver ID card issued by a state or other U.S. or Canadian government agency.
- A valid passport.
- A photo ID issued by the armed forces of the United States.

What are the penalties for a violation?

Penalties for a violation are a 4th degree misdemeanor (30 days imprisonment and/or \$250 fine), and a 3rd degree misdemeanor (60 days imprisonment and/or a \$500 fine) for a subsequent violation.

When does this law go into effect?

This law takes effect on April 14, 2016.

What if I have questions or need more information?

Visit clevelandhealth.org and search for "tobacco laws".