Why raise the tobacco sale age in Washington State?

A tobacco 21 sale age complements other local strategies to reduce youth tobacco use, including banning flavored tobacco products, limiting tobacco permits, eliminating sales of tobacco products in pharmacies, and placing packaging and pricing requirements on cigars.

Raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save hundreds of thousands of lives, according to a 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine.

Nicotine is strongly addictive, and adolescents and young adults are more susceptible to its effects because their brains are still developing. Delaying the age when young people first experiment with or begin using tobacco can reduce the risk that they will become addicted smokers.

“Raising the legal minimum age for cigarette purchaser to 21 could gut our key young adult market (17-20) ...”

– Philip Morris report, January 21, 1986

95% of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21

80% of adult smokers become daily smokers before they turn 21

33% of kids under 18 who become regular smokers will die as a result of smoking

Learn more and take action at www.washington21.org

2 Calculated based on data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)’s public online data analysis system (PDAS), National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2016, https://pdas.samhsa.gov/#/survey/NSDUH-2016-DS0001
3 Ibid.