

FDA asks public to join battle against smoking by children

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Photo: National Institutes of Health

Reporting tobacco law violations helps keep cigarettes out of kids' hands, agency says

(HealthDay)—The U.S. Food and Drug Administration wants your help in keeping children away from tobacco.

Every day, more than 3,200 Americans under the age of 18 smoke their first cigarette, and more than 700 become daily smokers, according to the agency.

Complaints from members of the public about potential violations of federal laws that forbid the sale of [tobacco](#) to anyone younger than 18 can help reduce the number of young people who try cigarettes or become smokers, the FDA said.

Of more than 18,000 tobacco law violations between 2009 and Sept. 30, 2013, more than half were for selling tobacco products to minors, and more than a third were for failure to ask for proper photo ID to confirm the age of a person buying [tobacco products](#), according to the FDA Center for Tobacco Products.

There are several ways you can report a possible violation of federal tobacco laws. You can call file a complaint online, call 1-877-287-1373, or download and mail a form to the FDA Center for Tobacco Products.

Potential violations include: sales of cigarettes or smokeless tobacco to minors; sales of [flavored cigarettes](#) or flavored [cigarette tobacco](#) (except menthol) to minors; providing free samples of cigarettes to minors; sales of single cigarettes to minors, and providing free samples of [smokeless tobacco](#) to minors, unless in a "qualified adult-only facility."

You should provide as much information as possible when reporting a possible violation. This includes the date, location, product type, product brand and/or type of violation, the FDA said.

The length of time it takes to complete an investigation varies, depending on a number of factors. Information about a case can't be made public until the case is closed.

Businesses typically received a warning letter for first-time violations, but repeat offenders can face fines, seizures, injunctions or criminal prosecution, the FDA said.

More information: The FDA tells you how to report potential [tobacco product law violations](#).

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