

British government seeks vote on plain cigarette packaging

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The British government said Wednesday it would seek a vote on forcing tobacco firms to sell cigarettes in plain packaging before the current parliament ends ahead of a May election.

"This government is completely committed to protecting children from the harm that tobacco causes," said Jane Ellison, a junior minister in charge of [public health](#).

"That's why I'm announcing today that we will be bringing forward legislation for standardised packaging before the end of this parliament."

The current parliament is scheduled to be dissolved on March 30 ahead of a [general election](#) on May 7, according to its online schedule.

The regulations would follow a similar step by Australia, which introduced standard drab packaging for cigarettes in 2012, and the step was welcomed by health charities.

"Two-thirds of smokers start before the age 18, beginning an addiction which will kill half of them if they become long-term smokers," said Cancer Research UK chief executive Harpal Kumar.

"By stripping cigarette packs of their marketing features, we can reduce the number of young people lured into an addiction, the products of which are death and disease."

The opposition Labour party also welcomed the announcement, indicating such a measure would be likely to pass in parliament, but it was criticised by business groups that said it would encourage a black market.

The regulations would initially apply only to England and would have to be confirmed by Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if they are to be introduced there.

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