

Does longer walking distance to buy cigarettes increase quitting among smokers?

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Walking one-third of a mile longer from home to the nearest tobacco shop to buy cigarettes was associated with increased odds that smokers would quit the habit in an analysis of data in Finnish studies, according to an article published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Smoking is a global health risk. Retail outlets in residential neighborhoods have gotten attention as potential targets for policies to reduce smoking.

Anna Pulakka, Ph.D., of the University of Turku, Finland, and coauthors used data from two studies of [smokers](#) and former smokers to examine changes in distance to a tobacco shop and home with [smoking behavior](#). Study populations included 15,218 smokers and former smokers from one study and 5,511 from the second study.

Each 500-meter increase in distance (about one-third of a mile) from home to the nearest tobacco shop was associated with a 20 percent to 60 percent increase in the odds of quitting. Increased distance was not associated with lower odds of relapse by former smokers.

Authors note study limitations, including generalizability of the findings because all the data were from Finland, a country with strict antismoking policies.

"We found robust evidence suggesting that among Finnish adults who smoked, increase in the [distance](#) from home to a tobacco outlet

increased the odds of quitting smoking," the study concludes.

"The longitudinal study by Pulakka et al in this issue greatly strengthens the research base linking the retail promotion of tobacco and [smoking rates](#). ... It is time to recognize the risks that tobacco [retail outlets](#) pose to communities," write Cheryl Bettigole, M.D., M.P.H., and Thomas A. Farley, M.D., M.P.H., of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, in a related commentary, New Brunswick, N.J.

More information: *JAMA Intern Med*. Published online August 15, 2016. [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.4535](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.4535)
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